00025896

NOT TO BE ISSUED
OUT OF THE LIBRARY.

BOMBAY BRANCH

OF THE

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

TOWN HALL, BOMBAY.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

CONFUCIUS
THE GREAT TEACHER

CONFUCIUS

THE GREAT TEACHER.

A STUDY

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL G. G. ALEXANDER, C.B.

"Unless the Past be known the Present cannot be understood."

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.

1890

(*The rights of translation and of reproduction are reserved.*)

DEDICATION.

To those able and patriotic Statesmen, who are endeavouring to give new strength to the mighty Empire, founded and preserved by the wisdom of their forefathers, by infusing into it all that is most applicable belonging to the progress of the West; this attempt to draw more closely together two great peoples, who possess so many interests in common, is inscribed with every sentiment of sympathy and respect, by

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

IN the following pages I have endeavoured to bring together, in the compass of a single volume, and in the form which would be most likely to interest the general reader, a *résumé* of all that concerns the life, times, and teaching of the great Chinese philosopher, Confucius. I have occasionally included in the details of his life incidents which are legendary, rather than historical, for the reason that, had I discarded them, I should have deprived the reader of many striking illustrations of his character, and of the manners, and of the mode of thought, belonging to the time in which he lived; and in doing this I have only followed the example of many preceding writers, amongst whom are to be enumerated such high authorities as M. Pauthier and the Jesuit Father P. Amiot.

In the various extracts from Chinese sources I

have sometimes found it necessary to alter the terms in which they had been translated, in order to incorporate within them the explanations given in notes, and the better to bring them into harmony with the object of this work, as well as to make them more capable of being understood when produced as isolated passages; but I have for this reason, more frequently preferred an adaptation from some purely literal translation, whilst in not a few instances I have gone at once to the original Chinese text. My great object in every case, in addition to that which has been already stated, having been to place the subject before the reader in language which, whilst preserving a correct idea of the meaning of the original, would be most appropriate to the period of the composition, and to the circumstances under which it was written.

I am supported in my idea of the necessity of substituting a free rendering, approaching in many cases to a paraphrase, for a close literal translation of the ancient literature of China, by no less an authority than that of the Professor of Chinese in the University of Oxford, Dr. Legge, whose translations of the sacred books, written for scholars rather than for the general public, have put him at the head of our

English translators. Dr. Legge says, in the preface to his translation of the "Yih-King," published in 1882, "The written characters of the Chinese are not representations of words, but symbols of ideas, and the combination of them in composition is not a representation of what the author would say, but of what he thinks. It is in vain, therefore, for a translator to attempt a literal version. When the symbolic characters have brought his mind *en rapport* with that of the author, he is free to render the ideas in his own or any other speech, in the best manner he can attain to."

And this is put forward still more forcibly by Reinhold von Plaenckner, in the introduction to Laou-tsze's "Taou-ti-King," translated into German by him under the title of "der Weg zur Tugend," who writes—I cannot resist the temptation of quoting it at length—"Ich meine, es ist ein grosser Unterschied zwischen einer sklavisch-treuen und einer überlegt-treuen Uebersetzung. Die erste (nicht beste) lexikale Bedeutung der Worte einer Sprache wiederzugeben, und diese Worte hier wie dort aneinanderzureihen, muss zur Unverständlichkeit und Hässlichkeit führen. Die Uebertragung eines alten classischen chinesischen

Werkes Wort für Wort würde, wegen der oft grenzenlos erweiterten Bedeutung eines Wortes (zuweilen freilich sind die Bedeutungsgrenzen auch viel enger gestellt als im Deutschen), mehr noch wegen der kernigen, oft auch poetischen Kürze der Ausdrucksweise, geradehin unmöglich. Ich habe mich daher oft in der Lage gesehen, die mehrfache Bedeutung eines Wortes auch mehrfach wiederzugeben, vor allem aber gesucht, den Sinn von dem, was Lao-tse gedacht und in seiner Sprache classisch schön nieder geschrieben hat, wenigstens verständlich und im Zusammenhang wiederzugeben."

The foregoing remarks have a special reference to the classical and severer types of Chinese literature. Speaking of compositions of a lighter and more ornamental kind, Sir John Davis, in his admirable work on the poetry of the Chinese, observes, "There are two causes to which Chinese literature of the lighter or ornamental kind has owed its indifferent reception in the West—first, a want of choice and selection in the subjects; and secondly, a considerable absence of taste and judgment in the mode of treating them. It is really too much to expect that people will trouble themselves to look at what

is either stupid or good for nothing in itself, or so marred in the intermediate process as to have lost all the attraction it had possessed in the original state." And again, "The interests and reputation of Chinese literature in Europe seem to demand that its professors take some pains to render its introduction as attractive as possible, by a careful selection of the best subjects, and by treating these in such a manner as shall interest the greatest number of tasteful and cultivated readers. To weary the attention with a bare list of barbariphonous and uncouth names, to produce some bald and miserably verbal translation, to present the mere *caput mortuum* of something that in its original shape possessed spirit and beauty, is, in fact, scaring away attention from a new subject, which, with a little discretion, might be rendered sufficiently attractive even to *general* readers. . . . Whenever a work of taste meets with general approval in its own country, we may be assured that its success is in great measure owing to the merits of its style and language, and therefore it seems singularly injudicious to think of transferring the spirit and effect of such a Chinese composition into bad English, which it must inevitably become by a servile

adherence to the letter of the original. Between the greater number of European languages there is a certain connection, which allows literalness of rendering to be carried to a great extent—but a verbal translation from the one concerning which we now treat, must of necessity degenerate into a horrible jargon which few persons would undergo the disgust of perusing."

With regard to poetry Sir John Davis observes, "We may adopt the happy illustration used on a similar occasion: 'Celui qui prétendrait juger de quelque Poème que ce fut, dans une traduction littérale, pourrait aussi raisonablement espérer de trouver, sur le revers d'une tapisserie, les figures qu'elle représente dans toute leur délicatesse et toute leur splendeur.' Verse, then, ought to be the shape into which Chinese, as well as all other poetry, ought to be converted in order to do it mere justice."

When it has to be considered that the ideas belonging to the Oriental mind, have to be clothed in such a form of words as will best adapt them to the European intellect, and awaken a sympathetic interest in the general reader, I think it will be conceded that the principles set forth in the foregoing

extracts, cannot be too closely adhered to. Should I, however, whilst attempting to act up to them, have failed to make my subject sufficiently attractive, I feel convinced that it will have proceeded from no other cause than my incapacity to set forth the thoughts, words, and actions, belonging to the remote period of which it treats, in a manner or in a language that would commend them to the attention of a public whose taste for all that concerns Chinese classical literature has, with a few exceptions, been very scantily cultivated.

It will be seen that this work has no pretension to being a book written by a scholar for scholars. But it has not been lightly undertaken, nor have any efforts been spared, to overcome the many difficulties by which its execution has been surrounded. The greatest of these difficulties proceeded from the circumstance that amongst the most advanced students of Chinese, a great diversity of opinion exists as to the correct rendering of many passages — often amongst the most important—in the classical writings. Of course in such cases I have had to choose between conflicting authorities, and to select the rendering, which, after a careful comparison and a reference to

the Chinese text, was, to my mind, the one, in closest accord with the context, and with the general process of the line of thought of which it formed a portion.

The inception of the work dates from the time—now more than forty years ago—when the Confucian writings became part of my course of study when endeavouring to gain a knowledge of the Chinese language and literature during a period of service in China. In old age one reverts *à ses premiers amours*, and hence this book is submitted to the indulgent suffrage of the public, in the sincere hope that it may be of some little use in extending amongst us a knowledge of the people of another great empire, the confines of which have now become contiguous to our own.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

Introductory remarks 1

CHAPTER II.

Contemporary events of the time in which Confucius lived—Origin and chronology of the ancient Chinese, and their moral, political, and social progress down to the same period 7

CHAPTER III.

Birth, parentage, childhood, and youth of Confucius 29

CHAPTER IV.

Entry into public life—Marriage—Death of his mother—A period of mourning—Studies and occupations—Establishment as a teacher—Divorce from his wife—Views on marriage—A charioteer and musician 44

CHAPTER V.

Commences his career as a political reformer—Consulted by the Prince of Tsĕ, who invites him to his court—An incident on his journey—Failure to obtain official employment—Visits the imperial capital 66

CHAPTER VI.

PAGE

Interview between Confucius and Laou-tsze—Some account of that philosopher and his doctrines—Difference between them and those taught by Confucius—Effect of Laon-tsze's conversation upon Confucius 86

CHAPTER VII.

Confucius returns to Tsē—Disappointments—Re-enters his native state of Loo and resumes his studies—A short period of official life—Joins a hunting expedition—Ascends the Tae-shan—Remedies for misrule proposed by three of his disciples—Revisits Tsē—Summary of his system of morality .. 107

CHAPTER VIII.

Appointed president of board of public domains—Made minister of state—His stern inflexibility—Execution of a noble of high rank—Dissatisfaction of the courtiers—Criminal laws, and their administration—Adds greatly to the prosperity of the state—Jealousy of the Prince of Tsē—His treachery—Unworthy conduct of the Prince of Loo—Resentment and resignation of Confucius 123

CHAPTER IX.

In exile 149

CHAPTER X.

Last days and death 160

CHAPTER XI.

Personal characteristics 176

CHAPTER XII.

The Confucian literature—The first of the "Five Classics:" the "Yĭh-King," or the "Transmutations" 189

CHAPTER XIII.

PAGE

The second of the "Five Classics:" the "Shoo-King," or the "Records" 200

CHAPTER XIV.

The third of the "Five Classics:" the "Shē-King," or the "Odes" 219

CHAPTER XV.

The remainder of the "Five Classics:" the 'Lē-King," or the "Book of Rites and Ceremonies;" and "Spring and Autumn" 235

CHAPTER XVI.

The first of the "Four Books:" the "Ta Heŏ," or the "Great Doctrine" 243

CHAPTER XVII.

The second of the "Four Books:" the "Chung-Yung" .. 261

CHAPTER XVIII.

The third of the "Four Books:" the "Lun-yu," or the "Dialogues" 268

CHAPTER XIX.

The last of the "Four Books;" the "Discourses" of Mencius (with notice of his Life) 277

CHAPTER XX.

Concluding remarks—The place of Confucius amongst the teachers of the world—The insufficiency of his religious teaching for popular requirements—The effect produced by him on the character of his countrymen 289

LIST OF AUTHORITIES.

Panthéon littéraire, article, "*Kung-foo-tsze et les Sze-chou*," traduit par P. de Mailla.

Mémoires concernant l'histoire des Chinois, tome xii. Paris, 1814.

Works of Confucius and a dissertation on the Chinese language. Serampore, 1809.

Du Halde's History of China. Paris, 1735.

Pauthier's Livres sacrés de l'orient, art. "La Chine."

The Life and Teaching of Confucius, by the Rev. J. Legge, D.D. 1887.

The Sacred Books of China—forming vols. iii., xvi., xviii., xxiii., of "Sacred Books of the East," translated by the Rev. J. Legge, D.D. 1879–85.

Schi-King. Das Kanonische Liederbuch der Chinesen. Aus dem Chinesischen übersetzt und erklärt von Victor v. Strauss. Heidelberg, 1880.

Bibliothèque Orientale, vol. ii.

Le Chi-King, ou livre des Vers, traduit par G. Pauthier. Paris, 1872.

Lao-tse, Tao-te-King. Aus dem Chinesischen übersetzt und erklärt von Reinhold von Plaenckner. Leipzig, 1870.

Ta-Hio. Uebersetzt und erklärt von R. v. Plaenckner. Leipzig, 1875.

Tchong-Yong. Uebersetzt und erklärt von R. v. Plaenckner. Leipzig, 1875.

Lao-tseu. Le livre de la voie et de la vertu. Traduit en Français et publié avec le texte Chinois et un commentaire perpétuel par Stanislas Julien. Paris, 1842.

The *Shoo-King*, translated (with the Chinese text interspersed) by W. H. Medhurst, sen. Shanghae, 1846.

And a very close and literal rendering of the "Four Books," preceded by a short notice of Confucius, published in 1828, but the title-page having been unfortunately destroyed, I am not aware who was the translator.

The Poetry of the Chinese, by Sir John F. Davis, Bart., K.C.B. London, 1870.

Chinese Editions of the "Four Books," and of the "Shē-King," in my possession.

Art. "China" in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, by Professor Douglas.

Quellen zu Confucius und dem Confucianismus, von Ernst Faber. Hong Kong, 1873.

Lao-Tse's Tao-te-King. Aus dem Chinesischen ins Deutsche übersetzt, eingeleitet und commentirt von Victor von Strauss. Leipzig, 1870.

CONFUCIUS, THE GREAT TEACHER.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory Remarks.

THE human mind is so constituted that the interest excited by the incidents of daily life, and the contemplation of material objects, becomes insufficient to appease the cravings of a cultivated intellect. It seeks for a wider horizon than the present can afford, and so it endeavours to obtain an insight into the future, and to roll back the clouds of darkness which obscure the past.

There is a certain fascination in the dim shadowiness of the distant periods of the world's history. All at first seems wrapt in impenetrable darkness, then a little glimmer, then bright gleams of light, becoming stronger and stronger, as the midnight lamps of unwearied toilers pierce through the gloom, and enable events to be seized upon and resuscitated,

which had else remained hidden and lost to us for ever.

These remote illuminated periods may be compared to those verdant and fruitful spots which refresh the weary traveller's eye, when journeying through an arid desert. Like them, too, their value is enhanced by the scenes of desolation which surround them, and the historian, like the traveller, has to be on his guard, lest he be tempted from the right path, for he may find a "mirage" in his own prejudices, or in the false conclusions of those who have preceded him.

But the amount of pleasure to be derived from the contemplation of the past, will ever greatly depend upon the power of realizing it, and giving a positive and corporeal existence to the actions and actors of a by-gone age; to make, in fact, "the dry bones live."

To do this, the student must, as far as possible, identify himself with the circumstances of the period; and just as the reader of a romance personates for the time being some one of the characters delineated in its pages, and derives the greatest part of the pleasure which its perusal affords him from his capacity for so doing; must he, in like manner, strive to feel that he is not a mere looker on, but a participator, in the events which history may record.

It may indeed be said that the great—perhaps the greatest—difficulty connected with the consideration

of distant historical events is to be found in this "realization;" and probably one of its chief causes is to be traced to the fact of so many writers having looked upon it as beneath the dignity of the historian to notice those minor incidents, and everyday occurrences, which would have given reality and life to their descriptions.

If this be true with respect to history in general, it is still more applicable to those portions of it which, connecting the career and character of some individual with the period in which he lived, may be entitled, "historical biography;" and more particularly when persons and events are treated of, from which we are separated by vast intervals of time, and when races are referred to, with whom we have neither a direct nor a collateral affinity.

Yet it is to such portions of the world's history that we must turn, if we would gain a more enlarged view of human nature, and a truer idea of mankind in general, than it is possible for us to obtain by confining ourselves to the beaten scholastic track, and accepting—as regards all outside it—traditional errors which have become hallowed by constant repetition.

It is only within a comparatively recent period that the literature of one of the most numerous and important sections of the human family has been opened out to us; and, though its pages teem with

matter of the deepest interest, it is not so much from any new historical facts, or from any social or political lessons, that we are attracted towards them, but because we find man placed before us in a point of view which enables us to regard him apart from every association with which we have been accustomed to surround him.

It would indeed be inexcusable were we to neglect the additional means of extending our knowledge which has been placed at our disposal, or to treat with levity or indifference the history and traditions of a people so interesting, in whatever phase they may be regarded, as the Chinese.

As it is, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that, whilst an acquaintance with the histories of Greece and Rome is so widely diffused that the names of many men mentioned in them, who were distinguished from their fellows by their virtues, or made infamous by their vices, are familiar as household words, the history of this singular people, and the name of Confucius, one of the greatest moral teachers of his age, indeed of any age, remain comparatively unknown.

But in endeavouring to dispel this widely spread ignorance, although the means are not wanting, a great and formidable difficulty presents itself. A variety of circumstances, which can be easily under-

stood, have tended to place everything connected with China and the Chinese before the popular imagination in such a grotesquely distorted shape, that the attention of a very large portion of the reading public can only be drawn towards it when it expects to be amused.

Yet Chinese history is full of dramatic and tragic situations in which all the impulses and emotions belonging to our nature are freely exhibited, and a greater knowledge of it would tend to prove how mistaken those are who have arrived at the conclusion that, because there are so many differences existing between us and the Chinese, they must be a people all but incapable of arousing our sympathies.

But a great change must, sooner or later, take place. China, instead of crumbling away, as has been so often predicted, seems to be entering upon a new life, and to be thrusting herself more and more into notice. Though not moving with the rapidity of Japan, there can be no question but that she is steadily, if somewhat slowly, assimilating all that European progress has produced, best adapted to increase her strength and add to her resources. She is already an important factor in our political combinations, and it seems to be only reasonable that, as we cannot ignore her four hundred millions of people, the best thing we can do, is to endeavour to thoroughly understand them.

The first step towards this is to study what they were; the next, to try and trace out the various causes which have combined to make them what they are, and I think it will be found that amongst the chief of these causes may be ranked the teaching of Confucius.

> "De la seule Raison salutaire interprète
> Sans éblouir le monde éclairant les esprits,
> Il ne parla qu'en sage et jamais en prophète;
> Cependant on le crut, et même en son pays."

So wrote of him a great Frenchman of the last century, at a time when the curiosity of the literary world had been strangely excited by the vast amount of information published by the Jesuits, then in the plenitude of their power at the Court of Peking, concerning the wonderful, and till then little known, country, in which they had laboured for so many years with such extraordinary ability and devotion.

Amongst the many volumes of which the "Mémoires concernant les Chinois" is composed, is one by le Père Amiot, in which all the incidents in the life of Confucius, derived from Chinese sources, are minutely related. This has been largely followed by subsequent writers, and to that work and one on China by M. Pauthier, I am greatly indebted in the following pages.

CHAPTER II.

Contemporary events of the time in which Confucius lived—Origin and chronology of the ancient Chinese, and their moral, political, and social progress down to the same period.

IN order that we may have a clear comprehension of our subject, it is necessary for us to picture to ourselves the state of those portions of the habitable world, made known to us by sacred and profane records, at the time in which Confucius lived.

It was a momentous period, pregnant with great events. It included the downfall of Lydia, Media, and Babylonia, and the establishment of Persia upon their ruins; the release of the Jews from their seventy years' captivity, and the rebuilding of that temple which was not to be again destroyed till after the coming of the promised Messiah; the rise of Buddhism in India; the restoration of democracy in Athens; the expulsion of the Tarquins from Rome; the invasion of Greece by the Persians, and the battles of Marathon, Thermopylæ, and Salamis.

It was an age of great men. Sakya Buddha, the religious reformer; Ezekiel and Daniel, Haggai and Zachariah, amongst the prophets; Cyrus the Great, Cambyses, Darius, and Xerxes of the powers of the earth; Pythagoras, the Samian philosopher; the writers, Pindar, Æschylus, and Anacreon; Leonidas the Spartan, Miltiades and Themistocles the Athenians, and a host of others too numerous for mention.

It cannot be said that the several portions of the world which have been enumerated were either barbarous or uncivilized; for the arts and sciences were highly cultivated, and their political and social state was extremely artificial, and far removed from those primitive conditions which form the basis upon which all rude societies are regulated; yet, despite all this, and the brilliant intellectual powers with which so many individual minds had been gifted, they were, with but one solitary exception, enshrouded in the darkness of complex systems of idolatry, differing in detail, but agreeing in the gross and degrading nature of the superstitions emanating from them, and which it would appear was common to them all.

Let us now turn our attention to a remote corner of the same world, at the same time, in the far, far East.

We shall find there a people who have also

long since emerged from barbarism, surrounded by nomadic hordes and natural barriers, and so cut off from intercourse with the other advanced races of mankind, perfecting by different processes and by slow degrees that marvellous system of moral government which first created and then preserved during so many ages the Chinese empire.

Nineveh and Babylon—those vast cities—are no more: upon their sites we see but shapeless mounds. The empire of Cyrus has passed away. Greece, as a material power, is but a shadowy fragment. Imperial Rome, the mistress of the world, exists only as a tradition, an influence, and an example; for that life which is now found amidst her ruins, is but an embodiment of the living Present connected only by name with the buried Past. We still reverence Daniel and the prophets, but Israel is an outcast and a wanderer. The thoughts of the great writers of antiquity still live in the classic page; but all else is changed, and, look where we will, it is in China, and in China only, that we find traces of the distant Past, not dimly shadowed forth through a lengthened vista of changeful years, but standing out in bold relief from the destruction which the hand of time has so ruthlessly worked on all else around.

The origin of the Chinese is extremely obscure. We only know that at some period so distant that

no approximate date can be given for it,* they must have separated themselves from the main portion of the great human family by which Asia was then occupied, and, moving eastward, descended into the fertile plains, north of the Yellow River, where, abandoning their nomadic habits, they finally settled, and laid the foundations of a vast empire.

Although the date of the separation we have referred to cannot be accurately fixed, it is evident that it must have taken place long before language had received those developments which created Hebrew, Sanscrit, and their cognate tongues; for the language of the Chinese, however else changed it may be, has preserved to this day that exceptional monosyllabic arrangement peculiar to the primogenial state of man, and the cause of this seems unquestionably to be found in the fact of their early adoption of a system of ideographic characters, thoroughly adapted to such a form of speech, and not easily made applicable to any other.

It is true that an attempt has been made to prove that the Chinese were originally an Egyptian colony, and much stress has been laid on the circumstance of the similarity—amounting in some few instances

* "Uns erscheint die Chinesische Menschheit unter den Völkern wie das Urgebirge unter den übrigen Gebirgsformationen." Victor v. Strauss, Lao-tse's Tao-te-King, p. xli.

to identity—which exists between some of the earlier Chinese characters and Egyptian hieroglyphics of very ancient date. But such a coincidence may be very possible, without there being any real foundation for the inference which has been drawn from it, for there are several ways in which it might be equally well accounted for. In the first place, the invention of some of the simpler symbolic signs may have preceded the dispersion of the great Asiatic family, and would therefore be common to each of the sections into which it became divided; though, subsequently, these signs might in most cases have been superseded by others. Or we may equally account for this coincidence by the general resemblance which would be likely to exist between all such symbolic signs as might owe their origin to rude or abbreviated imitations of natural objects. Be this as it may, in the absence of any positive proof, the question will have to remain an undecided one.

Chinese chronology may be divided into three distinct periods: the "fabulous," the "traditionary," and the "historical."

The best Chinese authorities speak of the first of these as being unworthy of belief, and of the records connected with the second as being not implicitly reliable, for it is frequently difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between those portions of it which

are true, and those which are only partially so. But European writers, best competent to form an opinion on the subject, have decided that Chinese civilization may be traced back, by authentic historic proof, to a period of some two thousand six hundred years anterior to our era. This date would bring us to the beginning of the reign of the first of the "Three Emperors," to whom are imputed the invention of the arts and sciences. To these succeeded the "Five Sovereigns," and with the reign of the two last of these, Yaou, B.C. 2356, and Shun his successor, commences what may be styled the golden age of Chinese history; and it is upon the maxims of these two sovereigns, or upon those attributed to them, that the teaching of all succeeding ages has been based.

In connection with the undeniable antiquity of the Chinese, it has always to be remembered that they have been linked to a very remote past, by a continuity of language and literature, in a degree far beyond that which has been experienced by any other people, and that it is to this many of their most striking characteristics are to be attributed.

Up to the time of Yu's accession to the throne, on the death of the great Shun, B.C. 2204, the sovereign power had been elective, but after that it became hereditary.

To Yu is due the successful issue of those great

works of reclamation and drainage inaugurated by his predecessors, which not only led to his being raised to the throne, but have caused him to be regarded with a tender reverence, by a grateful posterity inheriting the same difficulties as those which he was the first to conquer.

It was this sovereign who divided the territory over which he ruled, comprising, with some small exceptions, all that part of China between the great wall and the Yang-tsze Kiang, into nine provinces or feudal states, which were subsequently increased in number as the limits of the empire were extended.

This process of extension, however, was very gradual as regards the enlargement of the frontiers, though much had been done before the age of Confucius towards subjugating the independent tribes who had succeeded in maintaining themselves within the imperial borders.

In Confucius's time, although the authority of the emperor was still nominally recognized, it had gradually declined until his power, outside the state which formed his immediate patrimony, was all but nominal.

The chief cause of this was the large addition to the number of feudatory states, made by the celebrated Woo-Wang on the occasion of the overthrow of the Shang dynasty, B.C. 1121. And it was only

natural that in proportion as the number and power of these states increased, so should the authority of the suzerain diminish, until at length he became little more than the nominal chief of a confederacy, the component parts of which were bound together by the loosest ties, and were often in a state of warfare with each other, or of open rebellion to his rule.

Still, though the substance of political unity was thus lost, the shadow of it was retained. In theory at least, the emperor was acknowledged by the majority of his so-called subjects, as the supreme fountain of honour, and as the sole regulator of the ceremonial and religious rites. It is true that it not unfrequently happened that some powerful feudatory would refuse to do him homage, or to render him military service; but, in the end, the mutual jealousies of these turbulent vassals was certain to produce so strong a party in favour of the imperial claims as to prevent their extinction; besides which, it was only through their recognition that the smaller states could hope to preserve their independence and keep in check the aggressions of their ambitious and more powerful neighbours.

Thus a professed, if not a real, allegiance to the emperor, continued to be the centre round which the whole political system was made to revolve. But, apart from the position he occupied as the recognized

head of the State, he had an even higher claim to the veneration of the people, for, in his sacred character of "Pontifex Maximus," it was he alone, who was capable of acting as a mediator between the nation and the mysterious majesty of Heaven, and of offering up propitiatory sacrifices for the whole empire.

The emperor's revenue was entirely derived from the state which he ruled over by right of inheritance, and from the imperial domains, which covered a considerable extent of its territory.

At the imperial court, next in precedence to the emperor came the feudatory princes, whose position was regulated by the extent of their respective states. Of these there were four classes or groups; supplemented by a fifth, formed out of those petty princes whose fiefs were too small to enable them to secure their independence, and who were consequently obliged to attach themselves as vassals to some more powerful neighbour. The princes belonging to this class did not enjoy the same privileges as were bestowed on the four superior classes, nor were they permitted to share in the honour of being allowed a personal interview with the emperor.

Standing next to the feudatory princes, at the imperial court, came the high dignitaries and officers of state. These were not necessarily princes, or even nobles, though they often stood above them in public

estimation, through the administrative powers which belonged to their offices. They were divided into three classes; an official of the highest class had, in addition to many special privileges and immunities, a grant of land equal in extent to that which formed the private domain of a feudatory of the second class, and the others were proportionately provided for. There was, however, a lower class of officials, whose rate of pay was computed according to a scale based on the amount of cultivated land required for the support of one person. This amount varied according to the nature of the soil and the skill of the cultivator, so that the number of persons it was supposed a field of one hundred "mow" was capable of supporting is set down at from five to nine. A difference of opinion exists as to the dimension of the ancient "mow," some authorities fixing it about one-sixth, and others at about one-fourth, of an English acre.

The system of government which prevailed throughout the several feudatory states, was based upon, and closely resembled, that which had received the sanction of imperial authority. The personal revenue of the ruler was derived from a domain made proportionate to the extent of his possessions; the executive duties of the State were performed by ministers and officials distinguished by the same titles as those at

the imperial court, and similarly classified; and, like them, it was not necessary that they should be taken from the ranks of the nobility.

Land appears to have been held by feudal tenure at a very ancient date. The great land-holders were generally nobles, whose titles—which it has been the custom to translate by their English equivalents, of duke, marquis, earl, viscount, and baron—were either given them with the land, or bestowed subsequently as a mark of imperial favour, or as a reward for faithful service to the State. These titles were not necessarily hereditary, but were subject to renewal or confirmation, which in the case of the more powerful nobles was seldom withheld.

Whilst the Founders of the empire, who were unquestionably men of great ability, had done all in their power to establish a stable government, and add to its material prosperity, they had not neglected to foster and encourage the cultivation of the arts and sciences.

Already in possession of a written medium specially adapted to the language, we find it recorded in the pages of the "Shoo-King," that, so early as the reign of the great Yaou, some two thousand years before our era, a sufficient knowledge of astronomy existed to permit of the regulation of the calendar, and of the adjustment of the solar and lunar years. For

this purpose high officers of state were appointed to carry out the necessary observations, and so exact were some of those which have been recorded, that it is due to them that the earlier dates belonging to Chinese history have been fixed with so much accuracy.

This is the more surprising when the defective nature of their instruments, and the erroneous theory upon which many of their calculations were based, is taken into account.

Inundations and floods were incidents of constant recurrence in the early history of China, and it could only have been through a series of long and painful experiences that so great a degree of engineering skill was attained, as rendered it possible to control a stream of such vast volume and rapid flow, as the Yellow River, and to convert, by a system of canalization, immense swamps into fertile tracts of cultivated land. No wonder that a grateful people elected the man who had proved himself best capable of conducting this great work, as their emperor; and no wonder that their descendants, who have had ever and again to struggle against the same difficulties, continue to hold the memory of the great Yu in the highest reverence and veneration.

The engineering skill which enabled such operations as these to be brought to a successful issue,

could not have been of a low order; indeed, it is difficult to understand how such results could have been obtained, for even now, with the many aids and appliances which steam and other modern inventions have supplied us with, such a task would be full of difficulties.

There is no record belonging to any period of Chinese history, no matter how remote, in which music and poetry do not occupy a prominent place; but it was not until the reign of the Emperor Shun, that the musical scale was officially established, the dimensions of the tubes by which the notes were regulated, being used at the same time for the adjustment of the measures of length and capacity.

Many of the most ancient musical instruments are still in use, and probably in no other part of the world, is music to be heard which has been listened to with sympathy and pleasure by so many successive generations. A number of the airs have associations connected with them which render them all but sacred, and this serves to explain why the original primitive character belonging to Chinese music has been preserved unaltered down to the present time.

Paper was not invented till shortly before our era. Its place was supplied by the prepared leaves of various plants, an adaptation of linen cloth, strips of bamboo, and wooden tablets, and these, as the

literature was comparatively small, would have amply sufficed.

This literature, before the time of Confucius, in addition to portions of the classical writings to be noticed further on, consisted chiefly of disconnected historical records—each petty court having its historiographer—patriotic odes, popular songs and distichs which had frequently a disguised political meaning, with an occasional notice, rather than a treatise, on music, astronomy, agriculture, and the several industrial arts.

The progress made in these arts was very great. The collection of ancient metal vases and tripods, amounting to some fourteen hundred, made by command of the Emperor Kien-lung at the end of the last century—of which an illustrated catalogue was published—included sacrificial vessels dating from the seventeenth century B.C. The workmanship, decoration, and design of these vessels were of a very high order, and gave evidence of a refined and cultivated taste; and in some of the earlier writings mention is made of similar vessels, with inscriptions, having been in existence some five centuries earlier.

Various metals seem to have been used in the construction of these vases. A vase is spoken of as having been made of a mixture of gold and silver,

whilst others were of bronze of various degrees of density and hardness.

The frequent notice in the old writings of portraits and pictures, together with the manner in which objects in common use, including articles of dress, were embellished and adorned, gives a sufficient proof that a point of refinement had been reached which had made painting and design necessary adjuncts to the requirements of everyday life. But in art, as in all else where the imagination of this strange people comes into play, we find the same abnormal conceptions, and it is not without an effort that we bring them into harmony with our long-cherished æsthetic convictions, and learn to admire much which had at first repelled us, by its being in violation of every established law by which our taste is regulated.

In earthenware and pottery the ancient Chinese were skilled workers, but the manufacture of the porcelain which was afterwards to become so celebrated belongs to a later age. Though their clothing was at first restricted to linen in summer and furs in winter, the use of silk goes back to a very remote period, and perhaps nothing tends to prove the long interval of time over which the "pre-historic age" extended than the incident of a comparatively rude and primitive people having been able to perfect the manufacture of a beautiful and durable fabric out of

such an unpromising material as the filaments surrounding the cocoon of a small caterpillar—for, with their imperfect means, it must have taken a long course of years, devoted to patient and intelligent labour, to have arrived at such a result.

The ancient Chinese are, as far as I know, the only primitive people who have ever succeeded in making a textile fabric out of the spun threads of an insect, and it was as the producers and weavers of silk, that they first came under the notice of the Western world.

Notwithstanding, however, the difficulties which had to be overcome before this manufacture could be perfected, which it might be supposed would have enhanced its value, and the textural beauty of the fabric itself, it is somewhat surprising to find that linen held the first place in the estimation of the public; perhaps on account of its superior strength and durability. The first application of cotton to manufacturing purposes belongs to a later period, and woollen fabrics were unknown.

At a time when the inhabitants of these islands were clad in skins, and dyeing themselves with woad, the Chinese were a well-clothed people. The ancient style of dress was very different from that which is worn at the present time, and is best illustrated by the dress copied from them and still worn by the

Japanese, who had also adopted the ancient Chinese mode of wearing the hair.

Some of the court robes worn by the nobles and high officials were very elaborate. The various grades were distinguished by emblematical designs, embroidered in the five canonical colours—black, white, green, purple, and yellow—on the body and skirts of their robes; and, as a further mark of distinction, each noble on creation received a sceptre, made of jade or some other precious stone, the shape and size of which denoted his rank.

These sceptres also gave the emperor the means for verifying the titles of their owners, as they were so formed that on being applied to an aperture cut in the imperial signet for that purpose, he whose sceptre did not accurately correspond to it was at once declared to be an impostor.

It does not enter into either the scope or intention of this work to give a detailed account of the manners and customs of the ancient Chinese; but there are two matters connected with this subject which cannot be passed over in silence—their having been distinguished at a very early period from the other inhabitants of Asia by their adoption of chairs, though in the Confucian period mats were still in common use; and of their having invented a method of raising food to their mouths by means of "chop-

sticks," whilst their neighbours were content—as they yet remain—to apply their fingers to the same purpose. This last, is only another example of the originality of the methods by which the Chinese sought to supply their wants; and it is singular that this particular want should have forced itself upon their notice, long before the nations of the West had found it necessary to supplement the knife—and that to a very limited extent—by the companion fork, the use of which, in England, was almost unknown before the reign of James the First.

The ideas entertained by the ancient Chinese respecting the supernatural—in other words, their religion—is deserving of more than a passing notice, not only because all material results proceed from moral causes, but because, without some knowledge of this subject, it would be impossible to understand the peculiar line of thought which was the underlying influence by which their actions were guided.

Why it should have been so we know not, and it is a problem not likely to be easily solved, but the earliest notices of the religious condition of the Chinese, clearly demonstrate that they were more spiritual in their beliefs, and free from the grosser practices of idolatry, than any other pagan people whose history has been placed on record.

It was a darkness illumed by what has been

termed "the transient flashes of a deeply-seated consciousness of God," and Schlegel, who was a firm believer in the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, and in the teaching of the Catholic Church, declares "that amongst the great nations of primitive antiquity who stood the nearest, or at least very near to the source of sacred tradition—the word of primitive revelation—the Chinese hold a very high place."

In their oldest writings, a constant reference is to be found to a celestial and supreme Ruler, who is regarded as the almighty disposer of events, and regulator of human affairs; although with this was mixed up a pantheistic belief in the existence of good and evil genii, who were supposed to possess such a degree of power as rendered them capable of exercising a certain amount of influence over matters of minor importance—such, for instance, as might appertain to the personal needs of an individual. These were not, however, represented or worshipped in material forms, and the religious ceremonies were restricted to libations and sacrificial rites, intended to propitiate the favour, or avert the anger, of mysterious powers, of whom they stood in great awe, though their notions were confessedly vague and ill-defined with respect to their attributes. They had no priesthood. In the various ceremonies connected with their religious rites, it was the Ruler, the officers of state, and the heads

of families, to whom, in their several degrees, belonged the performance of the sacerdotal functions.

Even in what we have called "the traditionary period" of their history, they were separated by so great a space of time from the revolting and cruel practices which would seem inseparable from man's first endeavours to make himself acceptable to his deities, that the fact of human sacrifices having been at one time offered up by them is only made known to us through its being on record that, at some very remote period, a block of wood, rudely shaped as a man, had been established as a substitute.

Yet we learn from history that human sacrifices were at one time so prevalent, that the practice may almost be considered to have been universal, not only with the most debased, but amongst the most highly cultivated and refined nations. Thus we find it existing, down to the time of which I am about to write, amongst the Persians, Egyptians, Carthaginians, Thracians, Scythians, Greeks, Romans, and —to a certain extent—Jews. It seems to have had no limits or boundaries, for it was found equally in the New World, as the culminating act of an ornate ritual, and in the scattered islands of the Pacific Ocean. It was practised by our own ancestors; in India, under the form of self-immolation, it is almost within the reach of living memories; and at this

moment it is largely indulged in by the negro races of Africa.

A few instances will serve to accentuate the remarkable contrast between the Chinese and other contemporary nations, with regard to this long-lived and deep-rooted superstition. Whilst they had even ceased to burn the wooden semblance of a man, we find Themistocles offering up three youths; the wife of Xerxes seeking to appease the anger of the gods by burying twelve victims alive; the Carthaginians, as the highest act of propitiation, offering up their firstborn sons, and casting their most beautiful children into the glowing outstretched arms of a brazen image, from which they fell into the fiery furnace over which it stood; Aristomenes, the Messenian, slaying three hundred Lacedæmonians on the altar of Jupiter at Ithome; and later, Augustus Cæsar immolating three hundred victims to the manes of his uncle Julius. Even Aurelian was accused of having been guilty of it; and Porphyry asserts that, in his time, a man was sacrificed yearly at the shrine of Jupiter Latialis; and this notwithstanding that a law had been passed so far back as A.U. 657, under the consulship of Lentulus and Crassus, forbidding human sacrifices.

But though the Chinese had thus early shaken themselves free from this most terrible of all superstiti-

tions, they had not the less a deep-seated belief in many others. It is doubtful, however, whether in China superstition has not increased rather than diminished with the growth of years. Much that belongs to it may indeed be traced back to the earliest times, but it was greatly strengthened and enlarged, long after the advent of the great teacher, by the Taouists, who had strangely degraded the doctrines which their master, Laou-tsze, had sought to inculcate; and by the introduction of Buddhism, with an ignorant priesthood incapable of explaining its subtleties, with divinities brought down to the level of the lowest intelligence by being represented in — frequently hideous and grotesque — material forms.

CHAPTER III.

Birth, parentage, childhood, and youth of Confucius.

IN the north-east of China, washed on its eastern and northern shores by the muddy and storm-vexed waters of the Yellow Sea and the Gulf of Pe-chi-li, is the great modern province of Shan-tung, or east of the mountains—with its population of three millions.

The western portion of this territory consists of a wide and fertile plain, now intersected by the grand canal and its tributaries, but, towards the centre, the country gradually loses its level character, and is broken up by ranges of hills, increasing in height as they approach the north-eastern extremity of the province, which juts out boldly as a promontory to divide the waters of the two seas.

The climate of this region is marked by very great changes of temperature, the summers being much hotter and the winters much colder than is experienced in many other parts of the world having the same latitude, such as the south of Spain and California.

The soil is rich and fruitful, and the productions varied. Nowhere is there to be found a more vigorous, industrious, or frugal people.

At the beginning of the tenth century B.C. the celebrated Woo-wang, on ascending the imperial throne after the death of the tyrant Chow and the extinction of the dynasty of Shang, had divided large tracts of this territory amongst his followers. The tenure upon which these grants, or fiefs, were held, elevated the owners of the larger ones to the position of sovereigns, ruling over semi-independent states, and one of the most important of these newly constituted states—occupying the southern central portion of the territory just described—was a principality which received the name of Loo.

In a little town, of the third order, belonging to this state, called Tseaou-y, which is generally identified with the modern Kinfoo-hien, or Tseaou-hien, at some date in the winter solstice of the year B.C. 551, there were great rejoicings in the "ya-mun" of its prefect, on the occasion of the birth of a child to his old age, a much-wished-for son.

How little could it have been foreseen that this child —this Tartar-faced babe—was destined, in the course of time, to become the great instructor of his race, to be loved and revered by countless generations of his fellow-countrymen, as Kung-foo-tze—the great teacher

Kung—a name all but unknown to Western ears, except under its latinized form of Confucius.

According to some biographers, though there are others more modest in their claims, the family of Kung was one of the most illustrious in the empire. They trace for it an uninterrupted descent through nearly eighteen centuries, from a minister who had attracted the notice of the great Emperor Shun—mentioned in a preceding chapter—by his talents and integrity; and who received, as a proof of imperial favour, the gift of a small principality called Shang, situated in that part of the empire now known as Ho-nan.

Thirteen of his descendants, successively, governed this little state, when, in the year B.C. 1765, its then ruler, Ching-tang, was placed, by the unanimous voice of the people, on the imperial throne, and became the founder of the dynasty of Shang.

The sovereign power remained in his family for more than six hundred years; at the end of that time the violence and horrible cruelty of the Emperor Chow-wang became so insupportable that a league was formed against him, finally headed by Woo-wang, the martial prince of the state of Chaou, whose armies were everywhere victorious. Deserted by his followers, the tyrant retired to his palace, and, in a paroxysm of despair, set fire to it with his own hands, and perished

miserably in the flames. The empress, who had not only shared, but instigated, many of his worst crimes, was put to death, and the victor, raised to the vacant throne, became the first sovereign of the dynasty of Chaou.

The tyrant had left two brothers. The first public act of the new emperor was to recognize them as the legitimate representatives of the illustrious founder of the displaced dynasty, Ching-tang, and to bestow upon them two small territories in the principality of Sung.

From the youngest of these brothers, in a direct line and seventh in descent, came Chin-kan-foo, who was distinguished by his literary tastes and knowledge of ancient poetry, and it was from his son, Kung-foo-kea, that the name of Kung was adopted as the patronymic of the great philosopher's family; and it was from his great-grandson, who had been driven by the enmity of a powerful noble to take refuge in the neighbouring state of Loo, that Shoo-leang-heih, the father of Confucius, was immediately descended.

It is not explained why, in his case, the family prefix of Kung should have been omitted.

Shoo-leang-heih, who was noted for his strength and courage, had served with distinction as a soldier, before he had been appointed prefect, or chief-magistrate, of Tseaou-y. Having been left a widower

with nine children, all girls, his only son having died in childhood, he decided, though advanced in years, upon marrying again, in the hope that the succession to the family might be continued by male issue.

To take another wife, under such circumstances, would be a sacred duty rather than a matter of choice, and it was probably in that light that the old prefect regarded it.

Be this as it may, he had no sooner made up his mind on this matter, than he addressed himself to the head of the noble house of Yen, who had three marriageable daughters, and begged that he would bestow one of them upon him.

This request placed the noble Yen in a difficult position. He dared not reject a proposal coming from so high a quarter, whilst his love for his daughters made him unwilling to put any restraint upon their inclinations. In his perplexity, he sent for them, and told them frankly how he was situated. He did not hide from them, that though the prefect was a brave and distinguished officer, who could count kings and emperors amongst his ancestors, and came in a direct line from the virtuous Ching-tang, he was now old and austere; not quite the husband, in fact, that he would have chosen for a daughter; but there was no choice now, one of them must accept him, and he left it to them to decide which of them

it should be. The two elder daughters remained silent, but the youngest—whose name was Yen-tching-tsai—stepping forward, declared that she was ready to act in any way that her father might think best, and to become, should he wish it, the old prefect's bride.

The marriage took place, and, soon after, the young wife, having obtained her husband's consent, made a journey to the Nē mountain—for the Emperor Shun had dedicated a mountain in each division of his empire, to the worship of its guardian spirit—in order that she might offer up her prayers, for a blessing in accordance with the venerable prefect's wishes.

The spirit of the mountain seems to have listened favourably to her petition, for, in due time, she gave birth to a son, and filled the heart of the descendant of the great Ching-tang with joy and gladness, for his race was to be continued.

When we read of an act proceeding from pious faith, such as that by which the mother of Confucius was actuated on this occasion, we are apt to forget how naturally the woman turns in the hour of need to the higher Powers—no matter under what particular form they may present themselves—for aid or consolation. It is universal. It belongs equally to all, from the untutored negress to the highly cultured Christian ; and in this act of the young Chinese wife,

nearly twenty-five centuries ago, we find a parallel in our own day, when another young wife, also wishing to be a mother, and to give birth to a son, casts herself down, in her despair, before the sacred shrine of Notre-dame de Chartres, and is granted in answer to her prayers—so runs the record—an heir to an imperial throne.

History may not always—as it is said to do—repeat itself, but human nature works within a circle full of strangely recurring coincidences.

But it must not be supposed that the Chinese biographers are satisfied with a bare narration of the everyday circumstances attending so momentous an event as the sage's birth. Had they done so, they would have placed him on a level with ordinary mortals, and in an inferior position to that of other great men belonging to his age, whose advent into this world was always reported to have been accompanied by supernatural manifestations.

Thus we find that his birth was preceded by signs and wonders of portentous meaning. A few days before it took place, his mother was startled by the apparition of a strange monster, bearing a stone in his mouth, upon which was engraved a prediction of the future greatness of the son she was about to bear, and of the misfortunes which would befall the imperial family. Again, at the moment of his birth,

celestial strains were heard, two dragons were seen in the air, and the spirits of some of the glorified heroes of antiquity reassumed their mortal form, and appeared to do homage to the new-born babe.

Some Chinese writers consider that these statements are only to be looked upon as allegorical; though the general opinion is in favour of their authenticity as matters of fact. These legends, for they are nothing else, may be absurd, but they are scarcely more so than many which have received ready credence, in what are popularly believed to be the most enlightened portions of the globe.

It would form an interesting subject of investigation, for those who devote themselves to clearing up abstruse questions, to determine whether the frequent reference, in Chinese writings, to animals now looked upon as fabulous, may not be attributed to traditionary accounts of the latest appearance of individuals belonging to the extinct species of the animal kingdom. Geological researches have not yet opened out the paleontology of Tartary and China; may it not be found that the last haunts of the Ichthyosaurii and Plesiosaurii were in the swamps and wilds of Chinese Asia?

At the same time, the prominence given to these monstrous apparitions in all the earlier histories of the world must not be overlooked. Perhaps one of

the most singular of these is the instance given by Berosus, the Chaldæan historian, who lived about the time of Alexander the Great.

According to him, the Babylonians obtained their first knowledge of the arts and sciences from a certain nondescript being, having the head and feet of a man attached to the body of a fish, who issued daily from the waters of the Red Sea to instruct and civilize the people living on its shore, and who always retired to his watery home on the approach of night. This benevolent monster was gifted with speech, though he often preferred to communicate his ideas in writing. He was called Oannes. A picture of him had been carefully preserved, so that Berosus was able to describe him from it, and so put to silence those who might be inclined to doubt his accuracy.

Of course there were some, even then, who sought to bring the supernatural down to the level of ordinary comprehension, by declaring that Oannes was no mysterious monster, but merely a highly gifted stranger, who had sought to impart his knowledge to others, and that all else reported of him belonged to the inventive powers of those who had handed down the tradition, by which a memory of him had been preserved.

Like Mahomet, Confucius is said to have been stamped by Nature at his birth with marks typifying

his high destiny, though, as in the case of the prophet of Arabia, they were unintelligible to the vulgar eye.

It is more than probable that the old prefect was too well satisfied at the birth of an heir in his old age, to seek for signs and indications of future greatness; though his last days would have been filled with pride could he have known that his baby boy contained within him the germ of qualities, which would enable him, in the course of a long life, to exert such a salutary and lasting influence over so many myriads of the human race.

Three years after Confucius's birth, Shoo-leang-heih died, and the future care and education of the child devolved upon the youthful widow.

We are told that she was a woman of more than ordinary strength of character, so that, in the case of the Chinese philosopher, we have another instance, to add to the many which history affords, of how much the career and character of a child depends upon a mother's judicious training and guidance.

It is in the spring-tide of existence, when all which belongs to man's nature is most plastic, that maternal love—the greatest of all tender influences—can be best applied; and the Chinese are so deeply impressed with the idea of the close sympathy which exists between a mother and her child, that they go even beyond this, and say, "the education of a child

commences before its birth." And here, whilst speaking of the mother of Confucius, I would observe, that we must not picture her to ourselves as resembling a small-footed Chinese woman of the present day, for the custom of crippling the feet was not introduced till some centuries later, and the style of dress was more like that worn down to the present time in Japan.

Of the philosopher's childhood, very few incidents have been related, but he is said to have shown, at a very early age, a remarkable degree of veneration for the aged.

It is related of him—though the same story is told of his grandson—that on one occasion, having heard his grandfather sigh deeply, he was much grieved, and expressed a hope that it was not because he had done anything to give him pain or that would be likely to cast a reproach upon his memory. His grandfather, in great surprise at hearing such a speech from so young a child, asked him who it was had taught him to speak so wisely. "It was you, sir," was the reply, "for have I not often heard you say that he who does not know how to behave, not only disgraces himself, but brings discredit upon his ancestors, and is no longer worthy of bearing their name?"

This thoughtful gravity seems to have been

habitual to him from the very first, and extended itself even to the sports of childhood; for, avoiding all rude and boisterous games, his chief delight was to imitate, in company with his young companions, the various ceremonies and ritualistic observances which have always occupied so high a place in the social economy of the Chinese.

Of his education, in the ordinary sense of the word, the accounts are conflicting. According to some, the position of his mother, as a young widow, not permitting her to have a tutor for him at home, he was sent, at the age of seven, to a school at a place called Gan-ping-chung; but, as this was situated in another state, the account has been considered by many as apocryphal.

Others, and apparently with greater plausibility, say that he was placed at a school in his own neighbourhood, kept by a local magistrate called Ping-chung, who did not consider the instruction of youth incompatible with the performance of the duties of his office; and this has been brought forward as an evidence of the high estimation in which education was then held. This account, too, possesses the advantage of many details which would seem to substantiate it, and it is therefore the one I am most inclined to accept.

In conformance with a custom which still exists, the

name of Kew, which had been given him at his birth —from a fancied resemblance between a protuberance on the top of his head and a mountain, which that word signifies—was now changed to Chung-nē: "Chung" being the term applied to a second son, whilst "nē" was added to it by his mother in remembrance of his having been given in answer to her prayers offered up on the mountain of that name.

According to the testimony of those who accept Ping-chung as Confucius's first teacher, the young scholar made great progress under that master's skilful guidance, and soon gained a high place in his favour. He endeared himself at the same time to his companions by his modest conduct and the unequalled sweetness of his temper, though he surpassed them all in close and untiring application to his studies.

Soon after his tenth year, however, these studies were interrupted through the death of the Prince of Loo, which made it necessary for Ping-chung, in his capacity as a state official, to proceed to the capital in order that he might take a part in the royal obsequies. These, and the subsequent ceremonials, occupied a considerable period, during which the school was closed, but on Ping-chung's return the young scholar showed that a period of enforced rest had not been injurious to him, for he threw himself

into his studies with even greater energy and diligence than before, so that he was able in a short time to assist the learned magistrate in his scholastic duties. This he did with great tact and discretion, so that in a short time he had added the respect of his fellow-pupils to the good-will with which they had previously regarded him.

At fourteen, it is said, he had exhausted all the subjects his master professed to teach; but it was impossible for a mind like his to rest satisfied with the ordinary instruction to be obtained from others, and so it was that he was able to inform his disciples in after years—"at the age of fifteen, the acquisition of knowledge was the one object which engrossed all my thoughts."

But perhaps it was by lessons learnt in another, and very different, school, that the character of Confucius was impressed with many of the qualities which give it such a distinct individuality. His youth was spent in poverty, for his mother had been left in straitened circumstances; and, it is said, there were times when he was compelled to resort to hunting and fishing in order that he might support her and earn his own livelihood.

This is probably the reason why, on his having reached his seventeenth year, his mother succeeded in prevailing upon him to forego his love of studious

retirement, and seek for some remunerative public employment. And this he soon obtained, for the fame of the young scholar of Tseaou-y had already reached the court.

CHAPTER IV.

Entry into public life—Marriage—Death of his mother—A period of mourning—Studies and occupations—Establishment as a teacher—Divorce from his wife—Views on marriage—A charioteer and musician.

IT was upon first entering the service of the State that Confucius assumed the name so long borne by his family, and upon which he was to confer so great a lustre. Another transformation had taken place: First the infant—Kew; then the youth and student—Chung-nē: and now the official, scarcely yet arrived at manhood—Kung.

The appointment which he had succeeded in obtaining was one, in some subordinate capacity, connected with the collection of the revenue, which was levied in kind to the extent of about one-tenth of the whole pastoral and agricultural produce of the year. The amount upon which this tax had to be levied, and the best mode of collecting it, were necessarily important questions, upon the right solution of which the happiness of the people and the prosperity of

the State would very largely depend; and it is only reasonable to suppose that it was the early consideration of subjects like these which gave such a practical turn to the principles of political economy, of which he became the advocate.

It seems to have been a common practice at this period, for the *employés* of the Government to delegate their duties to others, whilst they appropriated the greater portion of the salary to their own use. Confucius was too conscientious to follow an example which could only be excused on the plea of custom. Rising at early dawn, he made himself master of the minutest details connected with his department, and, looking into everything himself, he considered nothing too insignificant for notice which might involve, in however slight a degree, the welfare of others. And yet, whilst doing this, he still found time to prosecute his studies.

It is evident that he must soon have obtained promotion, and that his pay was sufficiently remunerative, for at nineteen he married.

His wife, who was chosen for him by his mother, was called Ke-kwan-tsze, and belonged to a noble family, originally from that same state of Sung in which the ancestors of Confucius had been established by Woo-wang. At the end of a year she gave birth to a son, and, as a proof of the high favour in

which Confucius already stood at the court of Loo, we are told that the prince sent one of his courtiers to congratulate him on the event, and to present him with a fish of a rare and highly-esteemed kind, as the royal contribution to the customary feast. It was also intimated that it was the intention of the prince to honour the festival with his presence; and Confucius, in order to perpetuate the memory of such a gratifying compliment, added the name of the fish —"le," to that of Pih-yu, which the child had already received.

At the age of twenty-one he was appointed administrator of the royal domains, an important post, from which, however, he was shortly removed on promotion to the charge of the State granaries, which included in its functions the distribution of grain and other food in seasons of scarcity. These granaries were filled with the surplus produce of fruitful years, and any neglect in their management would have been a certain cause of very disastrous consequences.

As an illustration of the manner in which the duties belonging to Government officials should be performed, Mencius, writing some two centuries later, quotes the following declaration of Confucius: "When I was administrator of the royal domains, my first care was that the flocks and herds should be fat and thriving; and, in like manner, when I was in charge

of the State granaries, I devoted myself to seeing that the grain was stored in sufficient quantity, and kept in good order; until this was done, I thought of nothing else." And here we find the practical, straightforward nature of the man again asserting itself.

In his twenty-fourth year his mother died, and he was obliged to retire for a time from public life. He was at first all but broken down by the intensity of his grief, and he long continued to mourn her loss with deep and heartfelt sorrow. He buried her with great pomp at Fang-shan, the original home of his ancestors, having the remains of his father removed from their former resting-place, in order that they might be placed in the same grave by the side of his mother's. "We owe our being," he said; "to both parents alike, and an equal debt of gratitude is their rightful due. It becomes our duty, then, to give expression to this feeling, by rendering them the same homage, and it would not be just if those who have been bound together by such close ties during life were separated in death."

We learn, later on, that Confucius always attached great importance to a proper performance of the funeral rites, and that he regarded the neglect into which they had fallen as one of the surest signs of the degeneracy of the age.

He remained three years in the neighbourhood of Fang-shan, in the most strict seclusion, for—

> "Three years the infant, in its parents' arms;
> Three years the mourner, at his parents' grave."

At the end of that time he deposited his mourning robes upon his mother's tomb, and returned home, where he shut himself up for ten days, and then resumed his ordinary occupations.

But we do not find that he re-entered into official life, for now it was, at the age of twenty-seven, that his career as a teacher began. His house was thrown open to all who might wish to be instructed by him; and, though he willingly taught those who were too poor to offer payment, the income derived from the others was doubtless sufficient to relieve him from the necessity of again seeking Government employment, and to enable him to devote his whole energies to acquiring knowledge, and, when he had gained it, to do that which was still dearer to him—try and persuade others to share it.

It must have been about this period, though the exact date is not fixed, that he separated from his wife.

No reason is given for his having done so, and he himself never refers to it, but it could not have been caused by any gross misconduct on the part of his wife, for, on hearing of her death, many years later,

he was much moved, and spoke of her in affectionate terms ; yet, as will be seen, the causes which rendered divorce permissible were limited, so that the grounds —in this case—must have been legally sufficient to have enabled Confucius to exercise his right of repudiation.

It is plain that this was considered to be a matter of no great moment by his biographers, or we might have been somewhat more enlightened with respect to Ke-kwan-tsze's character. As it is, we know little more about her, than her name, and that she had given birth to a son, and, according to some authorities, to a daughter. It would be as well, however, to remember, that whatever her faults might have been, the high standard of human perfection, set up by her husband, may have made him exacting to a degree, not quite compatible with domestic happiness. This is, perhaps, the reason why the wives of philosophers have not always been in sympathy with the feelings entertained by the outside world towards their husbands.

There is one thing quite certain in this matter. The action of Confucius could not have proceeded from any dislike to marriage in the abstract, for he held it in high honour, and was no advocate of celibacy. His opinions on the subject were given at some length, in a conversation he held, some years

subsequently to this divorce, with the Prince of Loo, which, although scarcely calculated to remove our perplexity, it may be as well to quote in this place.

The prince had asked Confucius to explain his views with regard to marriage. The answer was—

"Marriage is the natural condition of man, and the state which best renders him capable of fulfilling his destiny in this world. It is a state which dignifies those who enter it, but it requires to be seriously considered, in order that all the duties belonging to it should be scrupulously observed. These duties are twofold, viz. those which are common to the two sexes, and those which, more especially, belong to either of them.

"The husband, as master, has to command, the wife has to submit herself and obey; but both husband and wife are required, equally, to act in such a manner, as may best imitate, and accord with, the relations which exist between heaven and earth, by which, and through which, all things are created, sustained, and preserved. The basis of this common action should be reciprocal tenderness, mutual confidence, straightforwardness, and a scrupulous consideration for each other's feelings. The husband ever leading and directing; the wife ever following and yielding; whilst every act is kept within the limits prescribed by justice, modesty, and honour."

He then proceeded to say—

"In every condition belonging to her social life, the wife is entirely dependent on her husband. Should he die, she does not recover her liberty. Before her marriage she was under the authority of her parents, or, should they have died, of her nearest relatives; as a wife, she lived in subjection to her husband; and, as a widow, she is subservient to her son, or, should she have more than one, to the eldest of them; and it is the duty of this son, whilst serving her with all possible affection and respect, to watch over and guard her from all those dangers to which, from the natural weakness of her sex, she may be exposed.

"Custom does not sanction a widow's remarriage. On the contrary, it requires that she should remain in strict seclusion within the precincts of her own home for the remainder of her days. She is forbidden to take part in any business external to it, and even in her own house she is only to occupy herself with such domestic matters as may be indispensable. During the day she is to avoid all unnecessary movement from room to room; and at night, a light is to be kept constantly burning in her chamber."

But she is to have a solace; her great consolation will be the reflection that—

"She will be glorified by her posterity as one who

had lived in the scrupulous performance of the duties belonging to a virtuous woman."

Then Confucius proceeded to lay down the most suitable limits of age for marriage, and to point out the necessity of great care and circumspection on the part of those having marriageable daughters, in the choice of husbands for them :—

"No one is to be considered eligible who has been guilty of any crime; or who has rendered himself amenable to the action of the law; or who is suffering from a constitutional malady; or who has any mental or physical infirmity, or such deformities as would be likely to produce feelings of distaste or disgust; or "—and this is somewhat difficult to understand—"a son, being the head of his family, who has lost both parents."

Outside of this circle of objections he sees no reason why a choice might not be made, which would fulfil all the necessary requirements and lead to "a life of happiness;" provided always that the wife on her part "so performs the duties appertaining to the married state, as to render her worthy of receiving a due share of that felicity which is the apportioned lot of all virtuous women."

With regard to divorce the laws as expounded by Confucius would seem to have been sufficiently liberal :—

"A husband possesses the right to repudiate his wife, but he cannot exercise this right in an arbitrary manner or without a just and sufficient cause. And of these just and sufficient causes there are seven: *first*, when a wife cannot live on good terms with her husband's parents; *second*, if she be found incapable of bearing children; *third*, if she has been guilty of immodest or immoral conduct; *fourth*, if she compromises the character of her family by spreading unfounded or calumnious reports; *fifth*, if she suffers from infirmities which produce a natural feeling of repugnance; *sixth*, if she cannot be restrained from using violent language; and *seventh* and last, if she secretly appropriates, no matter from what motive, anything belonging to the household, without her husband's knowledge."

However, notwithstanding that any one of these seven causes might justify a husband in putting away his wife, there were three separate circumstances under which the right could not be exercised:—

"*First*, when the wife, having lost both her parents, would have no home to return to; *second*, when on the death of the husband's father or mother, the appointed three years of mourning had not been completed; and *third*, when the husband, having married his wife in his poverty, subsequently became rich."

It appears from this, that Confucius could have had

no great difficulty in finding a legitimate pretext for separating from his wife, in the event of marriage—however much he may have admired the institution for others—having become distasteful to him; and that it had become so we can hardly doubt, when we take into consideration his studious habits, the claims made upon his time by his numerous pupils, and—as we shall find later—his love of travelling in his own, and in the neighbouring states, which frequently took him from home for considerable periods; all of which causes must have had the effect of making the trammels of married life, and it may be the association of an unsympathetic wife, insupportable to him.

But it may be, as some think, that he wished to prove, by this act, his earnestness and singleness of purpose. For his sincerity could hardly be called into question, when it was seen that he was ready to make the greatest sacrifices, rather than allow his efforts as a teacher to be interfered with. Or—and this was most probably the real reason—he may have come to the conclusion that the disturbing influence of domestic cares was incompatible with that absolute devotion to self-improvement, which—as the groundwork of all effort with regard to others—he had decided upon making the primary object of his life.

The kind of wisdom at which he aimed was indeed

of so lofty a character, that it is scarcely to be wondered at, that a mind absorbed in its contemplation, would lose its relish for the simple pleasures of a home, and not only become incapable of deriving happiness from them, but at last find them unbearable.

This is how he speaks of the knowledge which he sought, and it explains much that would otherwise remain obscure :—

"The highest study of all, is that which teaches us to develop those principles of purity, and perfect virtue, which Heaven bestowed upon us at our birth, in order that we may acquire the power of reforming those amongst whom we are placed, by our precepts and example; a study without an end—for our labours cease only when we have become perfect—an unattainable goal, but one that we must not the less set before us from the very first. It is true that we shall not be able to reach it, but in our struggle towards it, we shall strengthen our characters and give stability to our ideas, so that whilst ever advancing calmly in the same direction, we shall be rendered capable of applying the faculties with which we have been gifted to the best possible account."

This idea of the natural perfectibility of man seems to have been uppermost in Milton's mind when he wrote—

"God's creating hand
Nothing imperfect or deficient left
Of all that He created, much less man,
Or aught that might his happy state secure,
Secure from outward force. Within himself
The danger lies, yet lies within his power:
Against his will he can receive no harm.
But God left free the will, for what obeys
Reason is free, and reason He made right."

A strange world this we live in! The words of our great poet are, after all, but the echo of the thoughts which had passed through the brain of a Chinese seeker after truth, in the little feudal state of Loo, some two thousand years before.

But it must not be supposed that Confucius, like many other great teachers, allowed himself to be entirely absorbed in abstract speculations, or that he had no interests outside the studies connected with the duties of that higher life he so diligently sought to cultivate and establish.

On the contrary, he continued the lighter studies and gymnastic exercises which had been his chief solace during his days of mourning, when incapacitated from performing his ordinary work.

Amongst these lighter studies—putting music in the first place—he included the rules of deportment as comprehended in the ceremonial rites, an elegant style of writing, and arithmetic, or the science of numbers. In all these subjects he had made great

progress, whilst he had become a proficient in archery, charioteering, and the use of arms.

There was, indeed, an energetic virility about his character which made him despise anything approaching to weakness or effeminacy. To men possessing the same characteristics in the present day, we apply the newly invented term of "muscular Christians"; and Confucius was emphatically, and above all things, a "muscular" philosopher.

By being enabled, through his activity and skill, to hold his own in all manly exercises, he acquired an influence over those of his contemporaries who were incapable of carrying out, or even comprehending, his doctrines, which he could not have obtained in any other way; for the age in which he lived was neither effeminate nor sentimental, but one marked by bloody battles and frequent internecine wars—in many states, a time of lawlessness and turbulence, when no man knew that he might not be called upon to fight for his own hand. If, in the course of the sage's life, so little of this comes before us, it is that, with the lofty notions he had formed of his duties as a reformer, it was impossible for him to descend into an arena which was filled with combatants fighting for narrow and selfish ends.

The fact of Confucius having been a skilful charioteer will come as a surprise to those who only

know China as a country all but without roads, in which the limited vehicular traffic—almost entirely confined to its northern provinces—is carried on in carts of a truly rude and primitive description.

But anciently, when the population was less dense, and cultivation much more restricted, large tracts of land were still in a condition which permitted of their being driven over; and chariots were extensively used, both for domestic purposes and as instruments of war.

These chariots differed greatly in size and form, according to the use to which they were to be applied. Those of the emperor and feudatory sovereigns were often very large, so as to be able to hold several persons. They had four wheels, were elaborately decorated, and were, on state occasions, drawn by sixteen horses. Hence the emperor was often spoken of as "the lord of a thousand"—of these sixteen-horse—"chariots"; whilst in like manner the sovereign of a minor state, who was restricted by law to the possession of sixteen hundred horses, was termed "the lord of a hundred chariots."

For war purposes, the chariots were made of various dimensions, according to whether they were required to carry several armed men or only one. The larger ones were drawn by four horses, harnessed abreast, and constituted a very important element in the com-

position of the military forces of the state; and it was decreed that, in the event of threatened attack, each group of eight hundred families should furnish one chariot, sixteen horses, three men-at-arms in helmets and coats of mail, and twenty-two foot soldiers.

The chariots in ordinary use were smaller and lighter, and were frequently drawn by oxen, Confucius, in his many travels, generally confining himself to the use of a chariot drawn by a single ox, though we often hear of some friendly prince or noble having placed a chariot drawn by horses at his disposal.

Chariot-driving stood high in public estimation as an art requiring much skill and courage; and the driver of the royal chariot was always a dignitary of state.

But, outside his severer studies, music formed the philosopher's chief delight; and it was about this time, possibly to divert his mind from the painful incident which had just occurred in his domestic life, that, having heard of a musician named Siang, belonging to the state of Kin, who excelled in the knowledge and execution of the ancient music which he held in such high esteem, he at once decided upon seeking his instruction.

Siang received him with great cordiality, and, without loss of time, proceeded to initiate him in all

that he knew of an art which he described as one of Heaven's greatest and most glorious gifts. Then, after having expatiated on the power which music possessed of soothing the passions, elevating the thoughts, and purifying the feelings, and having explained some of the simpler rules of composition, he took up his lute and played a piece which had been composed by the patriotic Prince Wan-wang. Confucius listened as if entranced. Not a note escaped him; and, even when the musician ceased, it seemed as if he were still listening to his strains.

For ten days the same lesson was repeated. Then Confucius was required to perform it in the presence of the other pupils. He played it so perfectly, and imitated the style of the master so exactly, that Siang, full of satisfaction, proposed that they should proceed to the study of some other piece. But Confucius begged for a brief delay. "It is true," he said, "that, thanks to your instruction, I have been able to play correctly; but I am not satisfied, for I have not yet seized upon the motive of the composer."

"I will give you five days to find it out in," was the musician's reply.

At the end of that time Confucius again came before him.

"I must have more time," he said. "At present

the intention of the great composer only appears to me dimly, as through a thick cloud. If I am not able to see it more clearly, I shall consider myself incapable of apprehending it, and shall give up music altogether. I must have more time; I beg of you to grant me yet another five days."

The request was granted. On the fifth day Confucius returned, radiant with joy. "I have found it! I have found it!" he cried. "This morning, when I awoke, I felt as if transformed; for all that I had been seeking in the past few days had been suddenly revealed to me. I seized my lute, and at once understood and appreciated the meaning of every note I played. It was as if I stood in the presence of the great Wan-wang, that I looked into his large, lustrous, and gentle eyes, and that I heard the sound of his deep sonorous voice. My heart beat with rapture and was lifted up towards him in love and veneration, for now his every thought was mine."

This is evidently the language of an enthusiast whose organization had rendered him highly susceptible to those pleasurable emotions, in the production of which the chief power of music lies. But, as appears again and again in his writings and conversations, he valued music less for the intense pleasure he derived from it, than from his regarding it as one of the most potent of humanizing forces,

and the one best calculated to touch the hearts of a rude and semi-barbarous people, and to elevate and purify the sentiments of those who had reached a higher grade of civilization.

This view of the value of music had, however, no claim to originality. It belonged to a tradition almost as ancient as the empire; for so far back as the days of the Emperor Shun, even birds and beasts were said to have been brought into subjection through its influence.

The state of exaltation in which Confucius appeared before the less impressionable Siang seems to have had the effect of convincing the latter that his pupil had reached a point beyond which it was impossible to take him. "Sir," he said, "you are a man of such superior wisdom that I find myself quite incapable of acting as your teacher, but I will, with your permission, enrol myself from this day amongst your disciples."

The kin, or lute, upon which Confucius was such a skilful performer, is an instrument still held in great favour by the most highly cultivated Chinese; and it is perhaps the one best calculated to produce music likely to please a Western ear. It is about three feet and a half long and six inches wide, with a curved, slightly tapering convex surface, over which the strings are stretched, and a flat under surface, the

space between being hollow. It had originally only five strings, but two have since been added. These strings are of silk, and vary in size. They are fastened to the two extremities of the instrument, and kept in their places by a bridge fixed near the broadest end. The sounding-board is fitted with twelve mother-of-pearl studs to assist in the fingering.

The sih, or harp, is a much larger instrument of a similar character. It had at first fifty strings, but these were subsequently reduced to twenty-five. Most probably Confucius was a performer on both instruments, but the kin is the one with which his name is most closely associated; for it appears to have been his close companion in his many rambles.

The musical notation of the Chinese varied with the instrument. The ancient system still holds; and in the case of the "kin" and "sih" it is especially complicated, for each note is expressed by a cluster of characters—one denoting the string, another the stud, a third the position of the right hand, a fourth the fingering of the left, and so on; and as all these characters are written in a contracted form, it can be readily imagined how difficult it must be for the learner to decipher the notes belonging to even the most simple airs.

To dwellers in this Western world the music of the Chinese and Japanese—for it is all but identical—

is incomprehensible, and even the most universally admired compositions, played by the most accomplished performers, produce sensations which are very far from being agreeable. This may be from no other cause than that our tastes have been cultivated in a widely different school; for it is difficult to believe that the people of these two nations do not derive as much pleasure from their music as we do from ours. It has been well said: "It is unreasonable to pass a sweeping condemnation upon a systematically — indeed, scientifically — arranged and artistically rendered combination of sounds, which has been capable, during countless ages, of exciting the deepest emotions and of appealing to the tenderest susceptibilities amongst all classes of a highly cultivated people deeply embued with poetic feeling." May it not be asked, Is not this divergence in our tastes but another proof that the natural man has no innate sense of that which we call beauty, such as would enable him to establish some fixed standard of taste out of his inner consciousness, but rather that the objects which the eye sees, and the sounds which the ear hears, act upon the senses through an artificial medium produced by impressions indelibly stamped upon the brain by early, and long-continued, associations?

A national taste is, after all, but the aggregate

of individual sentiment, created, in the first instance, by some powerful influence which had been established for a sufficient time to enable it to take root.

Meanwhile Confucius had returned home to teach a steadily increasing number of disciples; to discuss and reason out the many problems with which his ever active brain was filled; and to seek for guidance and instruction in the study of a Past, which was in his eyes the never-failing source of all that was most pure and perfect.

CHAPTER V.

Commences his career as a political reformer—Consulted by the Prince of Tsē, who invites him to his court—An incident on his journey—Fails to obtain official employment—Visits the imperial capital.

CONFUCIUS continued to work on quietly and steadily for nearly three years. At the end of that time—we give it on his own authority—he found himself so far advanced on the road to wisdom, that "his principles had become firmly established." He had no more doubts or difficulties to contend against, his mission as a reformer had been made clear to him, and he longed to begin his work.

His doctrines, it is true, had been already widely disseminated. But though the seed had been scattered, Confucius was not a man who could stand by contentedly to watch its slow germination and growth. He was impatient to see the ripening of the promised fruit. He believed that his preparations were sufficiently complete to permit of his entering into the arena of public life with advantage, and he

longed for the time when he might be able to make practical application of his doctrines.

It was with this aim that he sought for such an official appointment as would give him sufficient power to carry out his views. Unfortunately, although he had continued on the best of terms with the Prince of Loo, that prince's feeble character, and the corruption of his court, made it hopeless for him to expect any suitable employment in his own state, so he had to look elsewhere.

He had already received overtures from the sovereign of the neighbouring state of Tsē, who had sent a messenger to inquire of him how he could best bring his turbulent vassals into subjection. But, from the nature of Confucius's reply, it is clear that the request had not been made in a way to commend itself to his favour. "Tell your royal master"—was his answer—"that I know nothing of him, or of his people. How is it possible then for me to be of any use in this matter? Had he wished to know something of the sovereigns of old, and of the way in which they would have been likely to act under similar circumstances, I could have told him, and it would have been my duty to have done so, for I have a right to speak upon subjects which I have studied deeply. But I am ignorant of the condition of his state, and so must remain silent."

It is evident that there were further negotiations, and that Confucius must have received and accepted an invitation to visit the prince's court, for not long after we find him, with a large number of followers, on the road to Tsē.

Some of those who accompanied him were earnest students of his doctrines; but many went with him from no higher motive than curiosity and a love of change. Confucius travelled in a chariot, drawn by a single ox. The rate of progress must have been slow, for his companions were able to keep up with him on foot.

They had only just entered the confines of Tsē, when an incident occurred which Confucius was able to turn to a practical account.

From a thicket near which they had to pass, strange sounds were heard, half groans, half cries, as if from some one in the agonies of death. On searching for the cause, they found a man stretched upon the ground in the last throes of strangulation. Confucius at once leaped from his chariot, unfastened the cord which had been tightly bound round the poor wretch's throat, and, when he was sufficiently recovered to be able to speak, asked how it was that they found him in that condition. "Alas!" was the reply, "you see before you a miserable ill-starred man to whom life has become insupportable." Then, at the request of

Confucius, who desired to know the causes which had produced such a bad example of the extremity to which a man may be reduced who gives himself up to despair, he proceeded, as follows :—

"I began life with very fair prospects. I had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and studied assiduously. In time I had learnt all that my masters could teach me, so I resolved to travel, in order that I might complete my education, and gain a better knowledge of my fellow-men. Actuated by this motive, I visited nearly all the countries of the world, and, after an absence of many years, returned home, and married. Then, alas! came my first and greatest grief. My father and mother died within a short time of each other, and I was horror-struck to find, when it was too late, how wanting I had been in filial piety, in never having done anything, whilst they lived, to repay them for all the tenderness and care they had lavished upon me. The thought of this filled me with remorse. Still I hoped to make compensation for my neglected duties in other ways. Since I had not only studied deeply, but had, in the course of my travels, gained a large amount of practical experience, I determined, as soon as the period of mourning was over, to emerge from my retirement, and seek to apply all the knowledge I possessed to the benefit of others. Under the influence of this idea, I offered

my services to the prince; but, greatly to my disappointment and humiliation, so far from my offer being accepted, he would not even grant me an audience, and this was my second cause for sorrow.

"But I would not give way. I was determined to resign myself to my fate, and I thought to console myself in the society of the many friends I had made, not only in my own country, but in the course of my wanderings. Ah, me! how bitterly was I deceived. Those I had most counted upon, did not respond to my advances, and, where I had looked for sympathy and affection, I found but a cold and chilling indifference. And last of all, my son—my only son—upon whom all my love and hopes were centred, not only refused to remain at home and seek to comfort me, but was seized with a spirit of adventure, and he now roams the world, disowning his miserable father, and pretending to be an orphan, whose parents fell into a river and were drowned whilst he was yet an infant."

Here the wretched man became overpowered by his emotion, his voice failed him, and he could not suppress his sighs and groans. After a time he recovered his composure and continued—

"Utterly broken down by the bitterness of my sorrow, I became incapable of action; my nights were sleepless, and in those terrible waking hours, all

the incidents in my life would again and again pass in an endless procession before me. So it was with me last night. Of what avail—I asked myself—had it been, that I had become wiser than my fellows, or that I had sought to share the fruit of my labours with others? Alas! I, who had thought to have reached a point which would have placed me beyond the grip of human infirmity, had not been capable of performing the most ordinary duties which belong to humanity. As a son, my conduct was utterly unworthy, for I had left my home when my parents were most in need of my support; as a citizen, I had failed to do anything for my prince or country; I could not even retain the affection of my friends; and, as a father, I had added to my guilt, in not having been able to inspire my son with the commonest feelings belonging to filial piety. Overwhelmed with these reflections, my life became so hateful to me that I sought to end it, and, but for your intervention, I should have been now at peace."

Confucius was greatly moved. "You were wrong," he said, addressing the ill-fated man—"very wrong; for, however great the ills man may have to bear, he but adds to them when he allows himself to give way to despair. You brought all this misery upon yourself, for you showed a want of judgment from the very first, in choosing a road which could not

possibly lead to the wisdom you desire. He who aspires to become a sage must humble himself, and begin by scrupulously performing all those duties and obligations which are incumbent upon even the most ordinary of mortals. Amongst these duties and obligations, the exercise of filial piety is the greatest, and it is to your negligence with regard to it, that all your subsequent misfortunes can be traced. Do not believe, however, that all is lost. Take courage, and lay to heart a saying which has been verified by the experience of countless generations: 'Whilst there is life there is hope;' and remember that it is possible for a man to pass from the greatest grief to the greatest joy; from out of the depths of despondency to the highest realms of happiness. Take courage, then, and return to your home. Act as if you had learnt to-day, for the first time, the true value of life, and set to work so that every moment of it may be put to some profitable use. Do not despair; it is possible that, even now, you may be able to attain to the wisdom, after which you have so vainly sought."

Then Confucius, turning to his companions, and speaking with great earnestness, continued—

"What you have seen and heard this day ought to be a useful lesson to you. Bear it well in mind, and see that each one of you so applies it, as may best

meet his individual needs." Having said this, he mounted his chariot and continued his journey. But, one by one his followers dropped off, until, at the end of the day, it was found that thirteen of them had turned back, in order that they might return to their homes and perform with greater strictness the filial duties, which were being neglected through their absence.

As soon as the Prince of Tsē was informed that Confucius had entered his dominions, he set out to meet him. His reception of him, on their first interview, was marked by the greatest cordiality, and, in order to show the high honour in which he held him, he conducted him in great state to the capital, where every preparation had been made likely to conduce to his ease and comfort.

After having been allowed a few days' repose to enable him to recover from the fatigues of his journey, he was summoned to the palace. "Tell me," said the prince, wishing to fathom the sagacity of which he had heard so much by a single question, "in what does good government consist?" "Good government," replied Confucius, "is simply the maintenance of the natural relations which ought to exist between man and man. A combination of princely conduct in the ruler, loyalty in the subject, paternal love in the parent, and filial piety in the child."

The prince, notwithstanding his natural levity, was so struck with the soundness and originality of this answer, that he would have at once taken him into his service and appointed him to some high office, but his courtiers restrained him. They, being jealous of the new favourite, represented that it would be highly impolitic to give extensive powers to a man of such superior attainments; that he would be certain, as a minister, to be arrogant and overbearing; and, in short, so worked upon the prince's fears, that he decided, for the time at least, to confine himself, in the choice of his ministers, to that comfortable mediocrity which has the advantage of neither exciting the rancour of the envious, nor the fears of the weak.

It is said that Confucius was offered the government of a town of the third class, and that he refused it on the ground that he had as yet done nothing which had rendered him worthy of recompense. But there can be no doubt that this might have been only a polite way of *declining* an appointment which he considered to be beneath his merits. He had a higher aim than this in seeking to return to public life.

So he lived on for a considerable period, concealing his chagrin as he best could, and hoping, as it were, against hope, the prince treating him with all outward respect and consideration, even consulting him in his

many difficulties, and surrounding him with everything that would be likely to make his residence in his state agreeable. He still continued his work as a teacher, but the time which was not so occupied, was applied to the collection and collation of the materials for those great works, which still form the monuments of his industry and genius.

His freedom from the trammels of office enabled him, under the auspices of the Princes of Tsē and Loo, the latter of whom placed one of the royal chariots and a pair of horses at his disposal, to pay a visit to the seat of the imperial court, which was at this time established in the city of Lŏ, in the modern province of Honan. This he had previously been prevented from doing, through the death of the emperor, at the very moment he was about to set out, and now he had the advantage of being able to travel in a degree of state which gave dignity to his position, and showed in what high estimation he was held by his own sovereign.

On arriving at the capital, he took up his residence with an official who was, at the same time, a philosopher and a musician, named Chang-hung, by whom he was treated with great kindness and hospitality. As soon as he was comfortably settled and sufficiently recovered from the fatigue of his long journey, his host accompanied him to the court, and introduced

him to the principal minister of state, with whom he had a long conference, during which the minister made inquiries as to the nature of his doctrines and his mode of teaching them. "As to my doctrines," replied Confucius, "they are very simple, being none other than those which were held by our unerring guides, Yaou and Shun, and are such as all men ought to follow; and my mode of teaching is still simpler, for I but cite the example of the ancients, exhort my hearers to study the sacred books, and impress upon them the necessity of pondering deeply upon all they may find in them."

"Tell me," again asked the minister, "how should a man begin who is anxious to acquire wisdom? I wish you to tell me in such a way that I may easily remember and comprehend your words, and be able to put them into practice."

"It is a large question," replied Confucius, "but try and bear in mind the following propositions, and doubtless, occasions will arise in which they will be useful.

"Just as the hardest steel is the most brittle, so is often that which is most solidly established the easiest to destroy.

"Pride puffeth up, and the ambition of the arrogant has no bounds; but the proud man may be brought low, and the claims of the arrogant be found wanting.

"The complaisant man yields up everything in order to gain an end, and finds himself, when failure comes, the dupe of his own facility.

"What I have said may appear trivial, but he who well weighs my words will have no difficulty in seizing their meaning, and in reducing them to practice. I have no hesitation in saying that he who does so, will soon find himself advancing rapidly on the only road which leads to true wisdom."

There is something in the tone of this answer which seems to imply that the bearing of the questioner had not been quite pleasing to Confucius. With all his philosophy, he was quick to resent anything approaching to a want of courtesy, and, on this occasion, probably, the polite deference with which he expected to be treated had not been observed.

One cause, to which this coldness on the part of the minister might be traced, was the fact that his imperial master did not regard Confucius or his doctrines with favour; for it is significant that, during the twelve months he spent at the capital, no mention is made of his having ever been invited to an audience. This must have been a great disappointment to him, for he would naturally have preferred, if he could have obtained it, an appointment in the service of a sovereign who held, in addition to his position as ruler of his patrimonial state, the still sacred mandate of emperor.

But there was much to be done, and to be seen, and to be learnt, and his time was not wasted. He asked, and obtained permission, to inspect the imperial archives, and much of his time was spent in looking over the ancient records and extracting from them much that afterwards appeared in his writings. There were many temples and public monuments to be visited, much teaching to be done, for he was never without pupils, and in his moments of leisure there was music, which he practised assiduously with his host, the accomplished Chang-hung.

Having so many congenial tastes, Confucius and Chang-hung had soon become on terms of great intimacy, and Chang-hung was never weary of descanting on his guest's vast fund of knowledge and his noble character. To one of the nobles of the court he described him in the following glowing terms :—" He is a man with whom none other belonging to our day can be brought into comparison. In person as in mind, he has been singularly gifted. You cannot look upon him without perceiving that he possesses more than ordinary intelligence, which streams forth from his eyes in two broad beams of light. He is very tall, with rounded shoulders, and long arms, and has a majestic presence. In conversation he constantly calls to remembrance the ancient sages, and every word he utters has the effect of

giving rise to virtuous reflections. His great aim seems to be to reanimate in his hearers a love for the wholesome teaching of the past; but he is so modest, that he is ready to be instructed by those who are in every way his inferiors. He presents the most perfect model for posterity to form itself on, and he will be the admiration of future ages."

When these laudatory words were repeated to Confucius, he exclaimed: "I am absolutely unworthy of such praise. It would have been nearer the mark if Chang-hung had said: 'he is a man who knows a little music, who wishes to obtain knowledge, and who seeks to comprehend, and give effect to, the ever sacred rites.'"

This special reference to the rites, was probably caused by his mind being at that time much occupied with investigations concerning the origin and meaning of the various ceremonies belonging to the ancient cultus. In these he had not previously been able to participate, for, as has been already noted, it was only the emperor in his character of Pontifex Maximus, who was entitled to conduct them, for, however much his temporal authority may have been encroached upon, his sacerdotal supremacy had, up to this time, remained intact. It should be understood that this only refers to the higher sacrificial rites, for there were certain minor ones which could

be equally performed by the feudatory princes. But there was this difference between them: that whilst these latter could only offer propitiation for those placed under their immediate authority, the emperor stood before Heaven as the mediator and intercessor for the whole empire.

At this time many magnificent temples were in existence, which were destroyed some three centuries later, in the ruthless destruction of the public monuments by Che-wang-te, who hated the past, and wished to make his reign the commencement of a new era.

These temples were naturally a source of great interest to Confucius, not only on account of their structural beauty, but because they afforded him the means for instructing himself more perfectly in many details connected with the sacrificial rites, and for estimating the changes which had been introduced in usages which had the sacred impress of antiquity.

One day on entering the great temple, known under this dynasty by the name of "the temple of Light," he was surprised to find that the portraits of the preceding sovereigns had been hung upon its walls without any distinction having been made between those which represented monarchs who had immortalized themselves by their virtues, and those who had lived lives of shame, and rendered themselves infamous by their vices. And he could not conceal

his disapprobation at the culpable indifference which had led to good and evil being placed on the same level, for it was ever his opinion that the line between them could not be too strongly marked.

In the ancestral hall of the temple dedicated to the founder of the reigning dynasty, he saw the golden image of a man having his lips fastened together with three needles. And on the back of this image there was written—

"The men of old spoke little. It would be well to imitate them, for those who talk much are sure to say something it would be better to have left unsaid.

"Let a man's labour be proportioned to his needs. For he who works beyond his strength does but add to his cares and disappointments. A man should be moderate even in his efforts.

"Be not over anxious to obtain relaxation or repose. For he who is so, will get neither.

"Beware of ever doing that which you are likely, sooner or later, to repent of having done.

"Do not neglect to rectify an evil because it may seem small, for, though small at first, it may continue to grow until it overwhelms you.

"If a man does not strive to resist slight acts of injustice, he will soon find himself called upon to face the greatest wrongs.

"Take heed to your words as well as to your acts,

and do not allow yourself to think, that because you may be alone, you are neither seen nor heard, but remember the gods are everywhere.

"A house may be burned down through a smouldering fire, when a fierce flame would have shown itself and have been easily put out. A river is formed by the waters of many streams; a cord so strong as not to be easily broken, by the union of many threads.

"A sapling whose roots have not struck deep, can be easily pulled up; but, if it be allowed to become a tree, it will be necessary to use an axe.

"From a man's mouth may come forth sharp arrows to wound, and fiery brands to burn. Take good heed, then, that neither issue from your mouth to the injury of others.

"Do not believe that because you have your full share of strength you may encounter danger without risk; there is no man, however strong he may be, who will not find some one with greater strength to cast him to the ground.

"He who is a rebel without due cause, degrades himself to the lowest level of society: but an unjust ruler excites discontent, whilst he who is considerate is readily obeyed.

"The masses of the people, and men of ordinary character, have little prescience or power of dealing with the unknown, and are only capable of following

the lead of others. Thus, when they are often brought under the influence of those who are circumspect in their conduct, virtuous, enlightened, and well mannered, they are insensibly led to imitate them, and so become in their turn an example for others.

"My mouth is closed, I cannot speak. It is in vain you inquire of me, I cannot solve your doubts, and, on my side, I have nothing to ask. Though what I teach is shrouded in enigma, it is not the less true. I stand elevated above you, yet no man can do me harm; what mortal is there who can say as much?

"Remember that Heaven has no favourites, but acts with strict impartiality to all.

"No matter how full the ocean, the streams continue to add to its waters without causing it to increase its bounds.

"Reflect and meditate deeply on all that I have said, and I shall not have spoken in vain."

Such were the words which Confucius read aloud to his followers in the solemn precincts of the ancestral hall of the reigning dynasty of Chaou.

Bearing upon them the impress of antiquity, and so appealing to him in a voice which seemed to him to come direct from Heaven, he was filled with pious exaltation. "Here," he said, "we have in a few words all that is most useful for man to know, and I am convinced that he who takes them to heart and

follows them, will not be far off from that perfection which it is our chief duty to strive after. As for me, I shall do my best to use them to my profit, and I hope that all who hear me will follow my example."

Though an interview with the emperor was denied him, he was allowed to go over the palace and see the many interesting objects it contained. Amongst these, placed by the side of the throne, was a bucket —like those in ordinary use for drawing water from a well—which at once arrested the attention of all who saw it, by the strange contrast it offered to the splendours by which it was surrounded. Confucius, who knew the tradition connected with it, pretended ignorance, and asked the courtiers who accompanied him, to explain the reason of its being there. None could tell him. They only knew that it had always been in the same place, and was said to have been there for many ages. Then Confucius, taking the bucket to a cistern belonging to a fountain which played in sight of the throne, plunged it into the water, and explained to them that in order to fill it properly a certain amount of force had to be employed, for with too little, the bucket floated on the surface, whilst with too much, it sank to the bottom, but that with a properly regulated pressure, it could be made to receive the exact amount of water which would enable it to float in equilibrium.

"In this," said Confucius, "the ancients found an illustration of good government, and showed that too little or too much force—in other words, weakness and oppression—invariably lead to failure, whilst he who would succeed must, as in this instance, exercise firmness and moderation. It was, therefore, the custom at the beginning of each reign, to carry out the experiment we have just witnessed, in the presence of the sovereign, in order that the true principles of good government should be indelibly impressed upon his mind. Alas! that an institution of such inestimable value, established for our benefit by our great exemplars in the past, should have been allowed to fall into disuse!"

But one of the chief objects of this visit of the great philosopher to the capital has not yet been touched upon. It was, that he might obtain from the lips of a still greater thinker than himself, some knowledge of doctrines which had greatly exercised the minds of many thoughtful men — doctrines so transcendental, so comprehensive, so boundless in their aim, that it is impossible to imagine that Confucius, the great seeker after, and teacher of, truth, could have put them aside with indifference, or have sought to remain in ignorance of them.

It is not often that two such men are to be found belonging to the same period as Confucius and Laou-tsze.

CHAPTER VI.

Interview between Confucius and Laou-tsze—Some account of that philosopher and his doctrines—Difference between them and those taught by Confucius—Effect of Laou-tsze's conversation upon Confucius.

ONE of the most remarkable and interesting incidents connected with the visit of Confucius to the imperial capital, was his interview with Laou-tsze.

This great contemporary teacher was then living in the retirement which was so dear to him, at some distance from the city. His fame had been long established, and there was a universal feeling of respect towards one who was as much distinguished by the simplicity and purity of his life, as by his great learning and the exalted nature of his doctrines.

Born of peasant parents in that part of China now known as Honan, B.C. 604, Li-pe-yang, or Laou-tsze, the "Venerable one," the name by which he has become famous, was between ninety and a hundred years old at the time of his interview with Confucius. Very few incidents of his life are recorded, but, in

accordance with the almost universal custom of associating the birth of great men with the miraculous, his entry into the world was said to have been marked by a variety of supernatural manifestations, some of which were of such an absurd and incredible nature, that it is difficult to understand how any one could have believed in them. It is chiefly through them, however, that his disciples, after his death, were enabled to claim for him a divine origin.

Of his early youth little is known, but it may be taken for granted that he possessed more than ordinary abilities and received a good education, or it would have been impossible for him to have held, whilst still young, the important post of imperial historiographer, in addition to some magisterial office. As imperial historiographer and keeper of the royal archives, he would naturally have had access to any writings, which might belong or refer to the literature of the Western world, and that some such writings were in existence is more than probable, since it is on record that, before his time, there had been a certain amount of intercourse between the part of China in which he lived, and the countries extending to the opposite extremity of Asia. This would account for the close resemblance to be found between many of his philosophic and religious theories, and those which were being formulated about this time

by Pythagoras, in the West, though they had received their highest development many centuries before in India, from whence, in the course of time, they were to penetrate, in the form of Buddhism, to the remotest confines of Tartary and China. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that his great work, the "Taou-te-King," dates from a period antecedent to that in which, according to tradition, he left his country and travelled for many years in distant lands, so that personal contact with those who professed these doctrines could hardly have influenced his teaching, though it may have somewhat modified the opinions of his extreme old age.

But there are those who declare this account of a journey into remote regions—the first of which Chinese historians make mention as having been undertaken by any philosopher or public teacher—to be apocryphal, so that we have no other alternative than either to go back to our original surmise, or to conclude that the extraordinary similitude which has been found to exist between many of Laou-tsze's opinions and those held by Pythagoras, and, in even a still greater degree, to that which was the original source of the latter's teaching, the fundamental doctrine contained in the Sanscrit Vedas, which belong to a date five centuries earlier, was a mere accident. But, in connection with this view, it has to be remem-

bered that the age in which he lived was not without its beliefs, and that an obscure kind of monotheism and an ingenious—if incomprehensible—system of cosmogony had previously received a very general philosophical acceptance.

Be this as it may, his great literary legacy, the "Taou-te-King," bears the impress of much original thought and of that deep religious feeling which made him always place the spiritual life before the material. Unfortunately, many passages of this work are extremely obscure, partly from the style in which it is written, and partly from the nature of the subjects of which it treats, so that the Chinese commentators are often at a loss to give them their exact meaning. This has led to many divergent conclusions; but these are, in many cases, to be traced to the commentators having approached the subject with some preconceived idea of the author's intention. Thus, one set of commentators have for their chief object, the reconciliation of the text with certain passages in the ancient classics; others again find in it all the leading tenets of Buddhism, and have no other aim than to show that Laou-tsze's teaching was based upon them; whilst a third body of critics—and that perhaps the most numerous one—have discovered a hidden occult meaning, only to be penetrated by the initiated. And so it is that the

followers of this great teacher, the Taou-sze, or Taouists of the present day, seek to obtain through the study of his writings a knowledge which will enable them to transmute the baser metals into gold, to acquire the elixir of life, and to lay bare the secrets of the future. To such bad uses have the results of this great thinker's many years of unremitting mental labour, been turned by the miserable magicians, necromancers, and diviners, who profess to be the reverent followers of his doctrines. But these corruptions no more belong to the spiritual and far-reaching subtleties of Laou-tsze's teaching than do the acts of cruelty and gross superstition to be found amongst professing Christians, belong to the pure and humane tenets, impressed upon the world by the crucified Jesus.

In Europe, within the last century, the "Taou-te-King" has received an increasing amount of attention from the students of Chinese literature, and several translations exist in English, French, and German. But the translators have met with even greater difficulties than the commentators. The style of the ancient Chinese classics—setting aside the frequent antitheses and metaphors—is at the best so concise, and each character is so pregnant of meaning, that anything like a verbal rendering into a European language is out of the question. The ideas which

the author intended to set forth must be seized upon and elaborated, and in doing this, in a work so full of transcendental thoughts as the "Taou-te-King," it is not to be wondered at that frequent, and sometimes very serious, mistakes have been made. Many of these have arisen from the translators, like the commentators, having approached this subject with foregone conclusions as to the author's meaning. Thus, in the last century, the Jesuit missionary, Père Amiot, came to the conclusion that he had found in the pages of the "Taou-te-King," the revelation of a Triune God; and, writing later, Abel Remusat was equally convinced that he had found in them three characters, used phonetically to express, three out of the four Hebrew letters, belonging to the sacred name of Jehovah.

These views have been combated, and shown to be erroneous, in a translation of this work by Stanislas Julien, published in Paris in 1842, under the title of "Le livre de la voie et de la virtu"; and in a German translation, published at Leipzig in 1870 by Reinhold von Plaenckner, they have received a further condemnation. On the other hand, in another German translation by Victor von Strauss, also published in Leipzig in the same year, the conclusions which Remusat had arrived at are warmly defended. For my part, after having carefully read over the several

translations, compared them with the Chinese text, and considered them in connection with all that has been severally brought forward in their support, I must confess to having been forced to the conviction, that the weight of the evidence is against the ingenious theories which form the foundation upon which the peculiar turn given to the ideas set forth by Laou-tsze in the fourteenth chapter of the "Taou-te-King," has been based. It seems to me that much of the difficulty, connected with a clear comprehension of what Laou-tsze wrote in this particular chapter, has arisen from his having selected three characters, which, whilst perhaps sufficiently conveying his meaning to his contemporaries, would best fit in with the metrical construction he had adopted.

The "Taou-te-King" is divided into eighty-one chapters. Its style of composition is metrical, with lines of varying length. It would seem as if its author sought to convey his meaning in the fewest possible characters; and hence it is that, to make the text intelligible, it has either to be accompanied by copious notes—as must necessarily be the case when a system of close verbal translation has been adopted —or else the subject matter contained in them, so far as it illustrates the author's meaning, must be incorporated with it.

The following freely rendered passages from this

work, will serve to give some idea of its scope and intention.

Laou-tsze begins, in the opening chapter, thus—

"The eternal source of all, both Heaven and Earth,
Is a deep mystery too deep for words;
For when we think to find them, we but speak
Of something narrowed to befit the sense,
Which finite man has of the Infinite.
Thus can we give no name to that which spreads
Beyond the bounds of knowledge; what we named
Would not take in the whole, but be a part
Extending scarcely to Creation's hour,—
And so, the Eternal Cause, the Way, the Life—
For all in one and each in all, is Taou—
Would be but known as the great Creative
Of that which man's perception can take in.
Now he alone can bring his mind to bear
On such a vast conception, who is free
From passion, and the world's disturbing power;
For not to him, whose eyes are turned to earth,
Is given an insight into Heavenly things,
Or power to free him from the bonds of sense.
Yet all—spirit and matter, life and death—proceed
In endless sequence from the self-same Taou,
Beyond the power of words, without a name,
Unfathomable, scarce to be conceived,
Such clouds enfold the gate of Spirit life." *

In another chapter, the twenty-first, he treats of the beginning of all things, and declares that all visible forms are but emanations from the same Supreme source—the "Taou."

"Material forms of the Creative power
Are but the outcome of the parent source,

* See A in Appendix.

Divine Intelligence, from whence all flows;
Before its advent nought but chaos reigned—
A chaos far surpassing human thought;
Then out its midst, dim, cloudy shapes arose,
So indistinct, they scarce could be defined.
Whilst in its depths the secret germs of life
Became diffused, but only yet as germs
Impalpable, enshrouded from the sight,
For a brief space. Then out of chaos came
The subtle spirit of Eternal Life.
And out of chaos, with it, came forth Faith,
The living memory, out the womb of time,
To teach us of the past, and of the great
Nameless First Cause, centre of life and truth.
And if you ask me how it is I know
Of this? I answer, only through His aid—
The perfect Reason, primal source of all." *

In another passage Laou-tsze hangs, as it were, lovingly on to the same idea; but, as if not satisfied with what he had written antecedently, he proceeds to still further elaborate it. He again puts forward the proposition that all matter owes its existence to a Creative Power, whose name, being unknown to him, he prefers to designate by some of his most striking attributes, brought together in a single word, and this, he explains, is the meaning he would attach to the term he had previously employed —"Taou."

"All things created
Came out of chaos.
Before heaven and earth were
Naught but deep silence

* See B in Appendix.

Reigned o'er a void
Of endless immensity—
Dead, for no breath
Of life had yet breathed there.
Then He, the Infinite,
Perfect, Immutable,
Moved through this nothingness,—
He, the Creator,
The Mother of all things.
I, in my ignorance,
Knowing no name for Him,
Speak of Him only
As "Taou"—Perfect Reason;
Thus in one word
Including his attributes:
He the all-Powerful,
He the all-Knowing,
The all-Pervading,
Ever existent,
Infinite, Boundless,
Near—yet, so far off.
Man's laws are earthly,
Nature's are Heaven-born;
Yet one and both come
Alike from great Taou,
The law to himself—
The centre of all law." *

And thus, having dealt with the conception and creation of all things out of nothing, and defined the meaning of the name by which he would distinguish the creative and governing principle of all being, he shows us in another chapter how, in the end, all animated matter has to return to its maker and become re-integrated in the Eternal and Supreme

* See C in Appendix.

Intelligence—the Taou—from which it first emanated; and this I have endeavoured to paraphrase in the following lines :—

"He who would enter in eternal peace
Must free himself from all seductive thoughts.
For every being, in a human form,
Has to accomplish a fixed destiny,
And we but watch the changes as they pass;
For each in turn takes on him some new shape,
And each in turn reaches his primal state;
In other words, arrives at final rest,
Having fulfilled the law which ruled his fate,
And so becomes immortal. He who knows
Of this, is one enlightened—far removed
From him who has no hope to guide his acts,
For the enlightened by the Faith upheld
Move calmly onward, all they see around
They look upon with sympathy and love
As part of their own being; and each act
Is based on justice and the rule of right;
But he who follows Justice—as a king
Stands o'er his fellows, ever moving on
With measured footsteps Heavenward, thro' the paths
Which lead him onward to the blessèd goal—
To where he sinks to final rest in Taou:
Ever immortal, in eternal Peace.
What matters it to him when death draws near?
For death but brings him to his final rest." *

These extracts may serve to give some general idea of the system of metaphysics taught by Laou-tsze. But he did not confine himself to speculative philosophy. Equally with Confucius, his great aim was to effect, through his doctrines, the moral refor-

* See D in Appendix.

mation of those who came under the influence of his teaching. But though the end sought for was the same, the means by which they endeavoured to attain it, were widely different. The one, seeking for regenerative power in the natural constitution of man and his relations to that Divine Intelligence which had created him, and of which he was again to become a part; the other, looking for it in human models belonging to the remote past who had exhibited in their own persons the divine perfection, and endeavouring, through the lessons to be learnt from them, to regain those higher conditions of life which, it was his belief, man had originally inherited.

But perhaps the best summary of the opinions and character of Laou-tsze is to be found in the writings of M. Abel Remusat.

That distinguished savant says: "I have subjected to a minute examination the doctrines of a philosopher, as celebrated in China as he is little known in Europe, and whose writings, from their being very obscure and consequently but little read, are perhaps not much more appreciated in his own country than in ours, where his name has been scarcely heard.

"The current traditions concerning this philosopher, for which we are indebted to the missionaries, are not of a nature to invite very serious inquiry. Our only positive knowledge being as to the fact that

this sage, the acknowledged head of one of the three great religious sects of China, was born some two thousand four hundred years ago, and was the author of a work which has come down to posterity under the pretentious title of 'The Book of Reason and Virtue.'

I would observe here that the proper rendering of the title of this book is a problem which translators have yet to solve; but to proceed: "It is recorded of him that, towards the end of his life, he left China and travelled very far into the west, to the countries from which, according to some, he obtained his doctrines, or in which, according to others, he taught them. In searching for the details, I have met with many marvellous stories told of him by those strange adherents who thought they were following his doctrines. For instance, believing as they do in the dogma of the transmigration of souls, they have imagined, amongst other things, that the soul of their master had had several previous appearances upon earth. But there is little doubt that many of these fables sprang out of the principles he taught, and might in many instances have some relation to circumstances connecting them with the other extremity of Asia. I was interested in inquiring whether this sage, whose life offers so many points of resemblance to that of the philosopher of Samos, might not also

have some conformity with him in his opinions. An examination of his works fully confirmed me in this conjecture, and effected at the same time a complete change in my views with respect to their author. Like the founders of many other religious systems, he was far from foreseeing the misdirection of his doctrine in futures ages, and, were he to appear again on earth, he would have just cause to complain of the manner he has been wronged by his unworthy disciples. Instead of finding him the chief of a set of jugglers, magicians, and astrologers, seeking for the elixir of immortality and the means of raising themselves to heaven through the air, I found in his writings a true philosopher, a judicious moralist, an eloquent theologian, and a subtle metaphysician, writing in a style having all the majesty of Plato, though, it must be confessed, possessing much of his obscurity.

"The metaphysics of Laou-tsze offer many remarkable characteristics which I am compelled to pass over in silence. How indeed would it be possible for me to give an idea of the lofty abstractions and the inextricable subtleties, in which his oriental imagination loses itself? It suffices to say, that the opinions of the Chinese philosopher on the origin and constitution of the universe, present no ridiculous fables or monstrous absurdities; they bear the impress

of a noble and elevated mind, and in the sublime reveries by which they are distinguished, they present a striking and indisputable resemblance to the doctrines professed a little later by the school of Pythagoras and Plato."

Such is the summing up, by one of the best qualified judges, of this philosopher's character and the nature of his teaching. It is evident that if his doctrines have had a less extended and direct influence on the character of his race than those of his great contemporary, it is to be traced to the deep and abstruse mysticism by which they were pervaded, rather than to any intellectual inferiority on the part of their illustrious originator. Indeed, as a deep and original thinker, it would be difficult not to award him the first place, were it possible to institute a comparison between teachers whose means for obtaining the same end were so different. In the case of Laou-tsze the regeneration of mankind was only capable of being produced by the acceptance, in the first instance, of a creed of which he was the institutor; whilst Confucius drew the principles he endeavoured to enforce, from human models, and confined himself to endeavouring to induce those he taught, to reform themselves on the maxims, and return as far as possible to the social conditions, of that "golden" age in the antecedent existence of which he so firmly believed.

Laou-tsze's reception of his brother sage would seem to indicate that he had not escaped the querulousness which so often accompanies extreme old age, for instead of acceding to Confucius's request—put forward, we can well imagine, in the most courteous terms—that he would enlighten him as to his doctrines, he proceeded to upbraid him for his love of publicity and popularity, which he attributed to vanity. He objected also to his large following of disciples, as being more likely to minister to his pride than to create and sustain a love of wisdom. "The sage," he continued, "loves obscurity. Far from wishing to obtain public employment, he avoids it, knowing that, at his death, all that he can leave behind him are such good maxims as he may have entrusted to a chosen few, capable of understanding and practising them; he does not seek to unbosom himself to the whole world, but has a due regard to time and circumstances. When the time is propitious, he speaks; when it is unfavourable, he knows how to be silent. He who possesses a treasure, guards it carefully, and does not tell every one he meets, that he has it. And he who is truly virtuous does not make a parade of his virtue, and say on every occasion that he is better than his fellows."

He objected that Confucius was endeavouring to give new life to society by insisting upon a slavish

25896

devotion to dead forms, and he was as unsparing in his condemnation of his principles, as he had been with regard to the manner in which they had been brought forward.

We are not told how Confucius accepted this censure, but he must have succeeded in soothing any angry feelings the old philosopher may have entertained towards him, and overcome his reluctance to speak on the subject of his doctrines, for the interview became a long one.

Once started on a topic so dear to him, with a listener capable of appreciating his views, can we not picture to ourselves the old man, as he sits, warmed into new life by his enthusiasm, throwing off all reserve and pouring out the treasures of his wisdom in a copious flow of words; now going beyond the boundaries of time and seeking to penetrate the mystery of a first cause; now showing the progressive state of all created being from its first conception; then coming to man, and defining his two natures—the material and the spiritual—his relations to that great, all-pervading Intelligence—the Taou, upon whose attributes he dwells long and tenderly; Taou—the primal cause, the beginning and the end of all? Then, descanting upon humanity in its relations to morality, he tries to explain how mind ever asserts its supremacy over matter, and that he

who stands always, as it were, in the presence of the Eternal through his consciousness of being the inheritor of a future immortality in union with his great Creator, is alone capable of acquiring those qualities which, in the prince, produce good government, and, in the people, good subjects; and which are indeed the basis upon which all society has to be formed. And then, as if suddenly recalling the fact that Confucius was also a seeker after Truth and a teacher, exclaiming—in a tone in which a touch of suppressed triumph mingles with a deep interest—"And you—have you also learnt to know this Divine Intelligence—the Taou?" To which Confucius is said to have sorrowfully replied, "Alas! no. I have been a seeker for nearly thirty years, but have not yet found it."

Then Laou-tsze took leave of him, saying, "I have heard it said, that the wealthy dismiss their friends with rich presents, and that the sage sends those who visit him away with wise counsels. I am not rich, but I think I may in all humility lay claim to being a sage."

We gain from this account that the part played by Confucius was a very small one, and even had he felt inclined to have asserted himself, his extreme reverence for age would have been sufficient to have restrained him from doing so. But his silence

may be traced to another cause. The grandeur and immensity of Laou-tsze's thoughts had overwhelmed him.

It is said that he returned home, silent and subdued, and that for three days he did not utter a single word. His friends were astonished at such unwonted taciturnity, for, as a rule, he talked freely on whatever topic the circumstances of the moment might suggest. They restrained their curiosity for some time, but at length ventured to inquire, what it was that had so affected him.

"When," he replied, "I meet one whose thoughts rise from the earth, and upwards, bird-like, soar; I so arrange mine own, that, archer-like, I send with certain aim a following shaft, and bring him to the ground.

"When I meet one whose thoughts range far and wide, swift as the flying deer; I so arrange mine own that, like a hound, running with greater swiftness, I pursue, and pull him down.

"When I meet one whose thoughts dive deeply down into the great profound; I, as a fisher, stand upon the bank, and when I see him seize the baited hook, put forth my strength and pull him to the shore.

"But when I meet one whose thoughts upspring to heaven swift as a dragon's flight, and lose them-

selves in realms of boundless space; what power have I? I can but helpless gaze.

"So it is with Laou-tsze. When he speaks I can but listen with open-mouthed wonder; I lose the power of utterance, my mind becomes troubled and filled with perplexity, and it requires time and rest to restore its stability."

Such was the effect produced on Confucius by the wide-reaching speculations and mystical dogmas of a philosopher, who had set no limit to the play of his vivid imagination, and had followed the leading of his own fancy as if it had been a Divine inspiration. To a mind so differently constituted as that of Confucius, it could not well have been otherwise. The spirit of the past of which he was the worshipper must indeed have appeared small when brought into contrast with the Infinite, eternal and creative Intelligence—the "Taou," as placed before him by the aged Laou-tsze. He was brought into contact, as it would seem, for the first time, with a train of ideas outside and beyond himself. The strongest minds are often shaken when they stand in the presence of the unknown, and Confucius was filled with awe, even as it was that Felix trembled, when "a prisoner in bonds" reasoned before him of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

It is only within the present century, that the

great work of Laou-tsze has received the attention from European sinologues, due to its importance as one of the most ancient metaphysical treatises extant, and it is very interesting to observe how steadily—if somewhat slowly—the exact meaning of the text seems to unfold itself, under what may be called the careful comparative analysis of successive translators. To those who are acquainted with German, the translations of Victor von Strauss, and of Reinhold von Plaenckner, published in the same year, but varying greatly in style, treatment, and conclusions, will be found most interesting, particularly if studied in connection with Stanislas Julien's earlier and far more literal rendering in French.

CHAPTER VII.

Confucius returns to Tsē—Disappointments—Re-enters his native state of Loo and resumes his studies—A short period of official life—Joins a hunting expedition—Ascends the Tae-shan—Remedies for misrule proposed by three of his disciples—Revisits Tsē—Summary of his system of morality.

THE return of Confucius to Tsē, immediately on leaving the precincts of the imperial court, was apparently due to a hope, that he might have been able to induce its prince, who was always ready to listen to, and applaud, his principles of government, to give him an opportunity for putting them into practice. But he was again doomed to disappointment. The prince had at first appeared inclined to favour his views, and had even gone so far as to deliberate upon the particular post, to which Confucius should be appointed. Then came a period of vacillation, followed by a complete change in his views, and, acting probably under the influence of his courtiers, who, as a class, always showed themselves inimical to tenets so damaging to their interests, he declared that it was impossible for him,

at his time of life, to inaugurate and carry out a new system of government; and that Confucius must not expect to receive any public employment. The moment this decision was conveyed to Confucius he withdrew from the court, and, having learnt that the influence of his enemies in Loo had materially diminished during the eight years he had been absent from it, he determined upon turning his footsteps in that direction.

On his return to his old home, he gave himself up almost entirely to literary pursuits, collating and arranging the mass of material he had been able to collect, into the shape in which it was to appear at a later period, under the several heads which constitute the works now known as the "five classics." But his studies were broken in upon through his friends having persuaded him to accept a Government appointment which had been offered him by the prince. We are not told what this office was, but it was probably a magisterial one, for its duties fully occupied his time. But he did not hold it very long. Soon after his acceptance of it, the prince died, and he refused to serve under his successor when he found that he regarded his views with disfavour.

He had now entered his forty-fourth year. His energy was unabated, he continued to study with assiduity, and he had a confidence in himself, which

never deserted him, and which enabled him to confront the opposition of his many enemies with undiminished courage.

His thirst for knowledge was as great as ever, and he worked hard, but he was never a sedentary student. He had a love for travelling which he often indulged, and so we find him, now visiting some neighbouring state, now rambling through his own; ever teaching, discussing, and investigating; or he would make a kind of pilgrimage to some hallowed spot in order to study the effect produced upon the character of the people living in its neighbourhood, through having been brought into contact with such an elevating influence. And his heart was filled with joy if, when visiting an obscure village, he found some of the long-lost customs of antiquity still scrupulously observed.

The manly vigour, which forms one of the most striking pictures of Confucius's character, was indeed constantly asserting itself. Being, on one occasion, on an excursion, accompanied as usual by a large number of his disciples, he came across a party of sportsmen in pursuit of game, and, much to the surprise of his followers, expressed his intention of joining them. "What!" cried one of his disciples in astonishment. "Can it be possible, sir, that you are contemplating a step so thoroughly out of keeping

with your high character? Surely a sage might better employ his time in studying the sciences, and in cultivating and extending virtuous principles."

"My friend, you are quite wrong," replied Confucius. "There are few things which are not worthy of the attention of the sage, and do not deserve to be carefully considered by him. But everything connected with the chase is full of interest. It was one of man's earliest and most important occupations. It not only enabled him to supply his daily wants, but it was the means by which he protected himself from the attacks, and his fields from the ravages, of wild animals. For the great sovereigns of old it served as a distraction from the toils of government; and to the sage, it is not only a relaxation, but a means for restoring the exhausted powers of a mind, wearied by close application to severe studies. But it has even a higher value, for it is through the chase that a man can best carry out the law contained in the sacrificial rites, and offer up animals killed by his own hands, in honour of his ancestors."

In order that the full significance of the last portion of this passage may be understood, it is as well to explain that, in the early days of the empire, the Chinese had not only to subdue the earlier occupiers of the land, and to assert their supremacy over the "waste of waters," by which so large a portion—and

that the richest—of their newly acquired territory was inundated, but, in addition, to contend against the wild animals by which the country was infested. In order to meet this latter evil in the most effective manner, the early rulers had established periodical hunts, in which the people joined *en masse*, and in which they themselves took a part; whilst, to encourage this destruction of wild animals as much as possible at other times, they had endeavoured to give it a higher sanction, by decreeing that all animals so killed had a special value as sacrificial offerings. The antiquity of this decree made it sacred in the eyes of Cǫnfucius; and, though the circumstances of the times were altered, he felt it could not be wrong for him to take a part in that upon which the sages of old had thus set a stamp of approval.

Whether the disciples continued to be scandalized by their master's conduct, or whether he had succeeded in reconciling them to it, is a matter of which there is no record. In either case, Confucius was too independent to regulate his actions by the opinions of others. He joined the hunting party and remained with it a week, but history is silent as to the sportsmen's doings.

Some years had thus passed, when again he was lured by fresh hopes to revisit the court of Tsē. The prince treated him with greater kindness and respect

than ever, but, in the end, as before, Confucius found that he could not rely upon his promises, and that the higher offices of state were still closed to him. He turned away sorrowfully to resume his duties as a teacher, for he had become restless, and he could, he thought, best extend the knowledge of his doctrines when a wanderer. Alas! time was passing rapidly away, and he was no longer young.

Amongst the few ancient usages which had been piously preserved, was the custom of ascending to the summit of some mountain—if possible the one dedicated to the guardian spirit of the locality—in order to offer up sacrifice and prayer, and Confucius was the last person likely to neglect so sacred a duty. On one of his journeys he ascended, for this purpose, the Tae-shan, with three of his disciples. On arriving at the top he stood for some time silently regarding the extensive view stretched out before him. Then, raising his eyes to heaven and sighing deeply, he gave evidence of being moved by feelings of the most painful emotion. In answer to the anxious questions of his disciples, he replied: "Standing on an elevation like this, one looks over, as it were, the whole world; and, alas! alas! as I do so, I cannot help being struck with the sad fact that, of the myriads who live in it, there is scarcely one man to be found who is not devising some means by which he may best

injure, or even, if occasion served, destroy his neighbour. That in itself is sad enough. But there is something still sadder. It is, to be so helpless and incapable, that even when we would wish to do so, we can neither find remedies for existing evils, nor some way of warding off those which are about to come. You, my friends, have doubtless thought over this matter; let me have then your counsel with regard to it, each one speaking in his turn, and saying what he would propose."

Then, after a few moments' reflection, spoke out the martial-minded disciple, Tsze-loo: "As for me, I think I could manage it easily, if I were placed at the head of a great army. But, even then, I would not be precipitate. Before taking the field, I would see that my troops were thoroughly organized and disciplined, and commanded by competent officers; then, when all was ready, I would lead them against the enemy, with clang of gongs and many-coloured standards glittering in the sunlight. The victory assured, I would cut off the heads of the vanquished leaders, and expose them publicly as a warning to evil-doers. Then—if I were a king—I would return to my capital, and there, with the assistance of these my two companions, take such measures as would cause the existing laws to be respected, and the ancient usages to be revived."

"You speak like a soldier," said Confucius.

"On my part," said the second disciple, Tsze-kung, "I should act quite differently. For instance, in the case of two rival states about to commence hostilities, I should wait for such a time as the two hostile armies were drawn up facing each other. Then, clad in mourning robes, I should throw myself between them—I should supplicate the generals to proclaim silence, and, as soon as I was able to obtain a hearing, I should set before them, in moving terms, all the horrors of war, and the blessings of peace; I should dilate upon the ignominy of defeat, the agonies of a lingering death, the miseries brought upon bereft wives and helpless children. Moved by my words, they would doubtless lay down their arms; and then —if I were a king—I would make Tsze-loo my war minister."

"Tsze-kung," said Confucius, "you are an orator."

The third and last disciple, Yen-hwui, remained silent. It was some time before Confucius could overcome his reluctance to give his opinion, but at length he spake as follows: "Were I called upon to work out some scheme of benevolence, in a way that would be beneficial to my fellow-men, I would not aspire to be a king. In that respect I have not the same lofty ambition as my brother disciples. On the contrary, I would desire rather to live under the sway

of a king who was virtuous and enlightened, and then I would try to act in such a way as might attract his attention and gain his favour, so that he might give me some employment, such as would enable me, so far as my feeble powers would permit, to help him in carrying out his plans for the good government of his people.

"The sweet-scented flower does not grow in a garden filled with rank fetid. weeds; neither is a sovereign like the great Yaou, found sharing his throne with a licentious tyrant. We would begin by separating the evil from the good, by banishing sycophants and ill-doers, and filling their places with men of probity and purity of life. It would be their care, not only to instruct the people in their several duties, but to see that they put into practice all that they had been taught. Having accomplished this, we need have no fear of enemies. We should be able to disband our armies, level our fortifications, use the stones of our ramparts for building, sow grain in the ditches, and turn our weapons — for which there would be no further use—into tools for our labourers. Military science, under these circumstances, would not be required; and, as there would be no longer any field upon which Tsze-loo could display his great valour, I would advise him to transfer all his energies to civil life, and to be exact and untiring in the per-

formance of all its duties. As for Tsze-kung, I fear his eloquence would be out of place, and perhaps he will allow me to suggest, that it might be better for him to exemplify by his works that which he would seek to impress upon others by his words. Such, sir, are my ideas with regard to this subject. Should they be erroneous, I humbly supplicate my master that I may be enlightened."

"You speak like a sage, Yen-hwui," was the great teacher's sole response.

The theory of morals to which Confucius sought to give a practical application had gradually outgrown its original incompleteness until it had assumed a sufficiently comprehensive and concrete form. And it was at this particular period of his life that Confucius summarized it in the following terms :—

"Nothing can be more natural or more simple than the principles of morality I seek to inculcate. Neither is there anything new in my teaching. My maxims are but the outcome of the experience of the sages of old. The principles upon which the action of those ancient rulers was guided, and which were equally accepted by them all, were easily comprehended, and may be reduced to the following three fundamental laws :—Those which regulate the relations between the sovereign and the subject, between the parent and the child, and between the husband

and the wife. But outside of these fundamental laws, and yet forming a part of them, stand the five cardinal virtues. These have only to be enumerated, and we see at once that they cannot be dispensed with. First amongst these stands *humanity*, that is to say, that universal sympathy which should exist between man and man without distinction of class or race. *Justice*, which gives to each member of the community his due, without favour or affection. *Conformity*, to prescribed rites and established customs, so that each individual may have a fixed mode of life, and may be able to participate in the privileges, as well as in the disqualifications, of the society in which he is placed. *Rectitude*, which is but bringing together in a single word the love and desire for truth for its own sake. And lastly, *sincerity*, which may be defined as integrity, or veracity, or that open-hearted straightforwardness which, whether in speech or in action, throws off all reservation and disguise."

This mode of concentration was one of the many ways in which the great philosopher set forth his doctrines. He seems to have had a special affection for the concise forms of expression to which the Chinese written medium is so peculiarly adapted, and this perhaps, more than anything else, has, as I have already stated, led to endless controversies with

respect to the precise meaning of many passages in the ancient classics, and given an opportunity to the commentators who would seek to explain them, to increase the student's difficulty, by the divergence of their views, and through their having, not unfrequently, turned an ambiguity into an enigma.

And here, as a sequel to the summary of the great teacher's doctrine as set forth by himself, it may not be amiss to give a *résumé* of it as understood and explained by the Chinese literati at the present time.

"It is a matter of primary necessity that man, as a reasonable being, should live in communities.

"There can be no properly constituted community without government; no government without subordination; and no subordination without a dominant authority.

"The recognition of a dominant authority has to precede the establishment of the other social conditions. It is, in the first instance, either bestowed upon some individual who has obtained, in the course of a long life, the greatest experience, or on some one who has gained an ascendency over his fellows by strength of will or character, or through the possession in a greater degree than others of certain popular qualities, such as strength, courage, endurance. In the first case, it is a mere question of the date of

birth; in the second, the choice will naturally fall upon him who has best succeeded in winning the suffrages of those with whom it rests. Thus, just as, in families, the parent rules over his children, and the elder children over the younger; so in societies there must be a superior power, and, as a rule, he will attain to it who is best capable of exercising it, that is, who can best influence others so as to secure their ready obedience. This power of command is a rare talent, which would seem at first to be a special gift bestowed upon a few highly privileged beings; it belongs, in fact, in a greater or less degree, to the whole human race, being, in short, nothing more than the highest expression of *humanity*, for humanity in its simplest form is but another term for *man*.

"He who has most humanity is most a man, and is therefore the one the best fitted to rule over other men. Hence *humanity* is the foundation of society, and the best and noblest of all the virtues. He who is humane, loves mankind, and is the possessor of the virtue which best harmonizes with the word 'man.' But his love, though unselfish and far extending, has necessarily various degrees of difference and limitation, and it is the due recognition of each man's claims in this particular which constitutes '*justice*.'

"Neither humanity nor justice are arbitrary, for their laws are independent of the will, but in order to

apply them, in however limited a degree, there must be some settled form of legislation, an established ceremonial, and a fixed ritual; and it is obedience to the laws, conformity to established customs, and a due observance of the rites, which constitutes the third of the cardinal virtues, and which, from its being the chief regulator of each individual's actions, may be best expressed by the single word '*order.*'

"Now, to ensure the proper fulfilment of these several duties without running counter to the requirements of order, it is necessary to acquire knowledge and discrimination, so that all things may be examined fairly and without prejudice, with the sole object of finding out the truth and acting in conformity with its dictates; and it is this which is comprehended in the term *moral rectitude* or *virtue.*

"But something more is wanted. Humanity, justice, order, even virtue, may at times go astray. They need a faithful companion who will never abandon them, to guard them from egotism, self-interest, and the many other insidious weaknesses to which they are liable. This faithful companion and tried defender is good faith or *sincerity.*

"It is sincerity which places a crown upon our lives; without it, our best actions would be valueless; the seeming virtuous, mere hypocrites; and the

shining light, which dazzles us by its splendour, but a poor passing gleam ready to be extinguished by the slightest breath of passion.

"It will be seen that these five virtues proceed from, and are reciprocally dependent on, each other. They form, in fact, a chain by which mankind is bound together in a close union, the source of their common safety and happiness; and this chain cannot be broken without all the ties by which society is held together being irretrievably destroyed."

This summary of the system of morals, taught by the great philosopher, will serve to elucidate many points in his character, which would otherwise remain obscure, and to give a more intelligent interest in the succeeding incidents of a life already passed its meridian. It will, too, afford a clearer idea of the reasons which had made Confucius so anxious to obtain some official position which would have given him sufficient authority to enforce his principles, for it has always to be borne in mind that his political opinions were entirely evolved out of moral causes. His great anxiety in this matter proceeded from a belief that his final success would greatly depend upon his being able to give such an example of the results of his theories, when reduced to practice, as would bring conviction to the minds of the most sceptical. He had hitherto been unable to obtain

the standpoint he required; but now a gleam of light was about to break through the clouds by which his path had been, for so many long striving years, overshadowed. His opportunity had come at last.

CHAPTER VIII.

Appointed president of board of public domains—Made minister of state—His stern inflexibility—Execution of a noble of high rank—Dissatisfaction of the courtiers—Criminal laws, and their administration—Adds greatly to the prosperity of the state—Jealousy of the Prince of Tsĕ—His treachery—Unworthy conduct of the Prince of Loo—Resentment and resignation of Confucius.

THE Prince of Loo, under the influence of a hostile faction, had, as we have seen, been adverse to the teaching of Confucius. But, by degrees, the cares of state began to weigh heavily upon him, until at length he found the difficulties of his position greater than he could contend against. The machinery of government had fallen into hopeless disorder, whilst gross and widespread licentiousness threatened to destroy the whole social fabric of the state. In this desperate condition he knew not to whom to turn for help, until, in the extremity of his perplexity and alarm, he bethought him of the philosopher whose doctrines he had affected to despise, and determined to appeal to him for assistance.

Confucius was absent from home when a messenger

reached him with the command to appear at the court of Loo with the least possible delay. He hastened to obey the summons, and, shortly after, in compliance with the prince's earnest request, re-entered public life as president of a tribunal, which had, amongst its other functions, the control of agriculture and the assessment and collection of the taxes on land. He at once directed his attention to these two questions, with respect to which the experience of his early days was very valuable. Not satisfied with his own judgment, but acting on the information obtained by experts, he caused the land to be divided into five several classes, according to the nature of the soil and its productiveness, whilst he established a code of regulations for its proper cultivation. He next regulated the assessment of the taxes, in proportion to the producing power of the holdings—which had not previously been the case—and this change not only benefited the cultivators, but gave great satisfaction to the proprietors, whilst it was not long before the condition of the revenue showed marked signs of improvement.

Amongst many other reforms which he introduced, was one connected with the disposal of the dead. It had become a custom with those who were rich enough to afford it, to appropriate a large enclosed space as a burial-place for their relatives, and to

erect magnificent monuments over their remains. These enclosures were often in the midst of fertile fields, and Confucius, evidently thinking of assessments and revenue, considered that the ground which was so occupied, might have been turned to a more profitable use, and that this custom was an abuse which had to be done away with.

"Places of sepulture," he said, "should not be made to resemble pleasure-gardens. Rather should they be brought into harmony with the feelings of those who weep and mourn, and it was in this light that the ancients regarded them. To feast in luxurious apartments and to give way to mirth and joy in the precincts of the tomb, is an insult to the memory of the dead. More suitable by far some rugged height unfitted for the plough, unenclosed, unplanted, and unadorned, where the pure and simple homage of the heart can be substituted for these vain frivolities. In this, as in all else, let us act up to the true spirit of the rites, as they were established by the holy sages of antiquity."

This reform was successfully carried out, and, at the end of three years, Confucius was encouraged to think that the changes he had been able to accomplish might, in the course of time, do something towards making the little state of Loo a model for the whole empire.

The Prince of Loo could not shut his eyes to the prosperity which had resulted from the enlightened and judicious action of his new minister. In order to show his appreciation of his services, he took the opportunity, on one of the highest offices in the state falling vacant, to offer it to Confucius, assuring him that it would not only extend his authority and so increase his power of doing good, but raise him at the same time to a position inferior only to his own.

Confucius was now more than fifty years old. He had all but reached the goal of so many fruitless efforts, and yet he hesitated, for it was probable that, when brought face to face with the responsibilities of the proffered office, he foresaw the many grave difficulties he would have to encounter. As the chief administrator of the law, with the power of life and death in his hands, he would have to act up to the principles he had so long professed, and allow no considerations whatever to cause him to deviate, in however slight a degree, from the path of justice. In the existing condition of the state, he knew that some of the worst crimes were committed by men of high social position, and their offences would either have to be condoned—which in his case would be impossible —or punished. But this unflinching application of the law would unite the whole of the upper classes

against him, and he would be rendered powerless unless he possessed the entire confidence of the prince, and obtained his sanction for all that he might find himself compelled to do.

In an interview with the prince he laid this frankly before him, and it was only when he had received an assurance that his great object in offering him the appointment had been to ensure that justice should be strictly and impartially administered, and that, with respect to any reforms he might wish to make, he could fully rely upon the royal support and favour, that his scruples were overcome, and he consented to undertake the duties of the influential office assigned to him.

It was not long before he gave evidence of his stern sense of duty, and proved to the corrupt courtiers, by whom the prince was surrounded, that the authority of the law was no longer to be trifled with. One of the most powerful nobles amongst them had rendered himself notorious by his licentiousness and rapacity; Confucius decided upon making such an example of him as should strike a wholesome terror in all high-placed evil-doers.

The unfortunate man, who, from his past experiences, had every reason to believe that his rank would have shielded him from punishment, found himself cruelly undeceived; he was brought to trial,

and, in less than seven days, condemned to death and executed.

Such prompt and vigorous action could not fail to produce a deep and widespread feeling of consternation in the precincts of the court. It extended even to the immediate friends and disciples of Confucius, some of whom upbraided him with having been unduly precipitate, and with having acted illegally in executing the extreme penalty of the law upon a noble of such high rank, who, no matter what his offences may have been, was well known to have possessed many amiable qualities.

But Confucius was inexorable. "I respect your motives," he said, in answer to their expostulations, "for, though you are quite wrong, you err from ignorance. What! do you not know that there are offences, seemingly venal, which make the man who commits them a greater criminal than if he were a highway robber; and that a noble who is habitually a hypocrite, liar, libertine, slanderer, or oppressor merits the severest punishment? But he, whose fate you lament, was guilty, not of one but of all these offences, and to have pardoned him would have been an act of weakness and partiality unworthy of an upright judge."

Nevertheless this feeling of dissatisfaction was too strong to be easily allayed. The nobles felt that one

of their most valuable privileges had been infringed; for the ancient laws—which were still in force—had expressly provided for their exemption from the ordinary penalties laid down in the criminal code.

Confucius was not a man to submit tamely to the imputation of being a law-breaker. He justified his action with much energy and warmth; but, before giving his defence, it would be as well to have some knowledge of the tenor of the criminal laws he had been called upon to administer.

They dated from a very remote period. In one of the earliest chapters of the "Shoo-King," or book of records, we find that the great Emperor Shun had promulgated a criminal code at the commencement of the twenty-second century preceding our era.

The major punishments in this code were five, viz. setting a mark upon the face; slitting or cutting off the nose; maiming, mutilating, and beheading—the crimes to which these punishments were made applicable being of a serious nature, such as murder, robbery with violence, housebreaking, resistance to lawful authority, rebellion, adultery, and extreme dissoluteness.

For minor offences, we have again five punishments; and here, it may be observed, for some occult reason not readily explained, the Chinese have had a special fondness for bringing all subject matters within the

imits of a category of five, thus: the five ceremonies, he five implements, the five ranks of the nobility, he five precepts, the five elements, the five (primary) :olours, the five kinds of grain, the five (cardinal) /irtues, and so on.

These five minor punishments included flogging—with a birch for boys, and with a whip for adults—and they were all carefully graduated so as to be easily proportioned to the nature and degree of the offence to which they were applicable.

In this edict of the great emperor's, the judges were especially enjoined to take good heed that the merits of each case were carefully weighed, and that whenever there were mitigating circumstances the next lower punishment to the one to which the offender was liable should be awarded; they were also told that, in doubtful cases, it was their bounden duty to lean towards the side of mercy.

The judges were also empowered, in cases of minor offences deserving of leniency, to commute the punishment into a carefully adjusted money payment. On the other hand, any repetition of an offence rendered the culprit liable to the punishment of death.

Nobles and members of the community, who were distinguished by some special merit, were to have these laws applied to them in a mitigated form, and were to be exempt from capital punishment.

The laws as thus promulgated remained in force till B.C. 950, when they were revised. It was then enacted that a money compensation, according to a fixed scale, might be accepted in lieu of punishment for major as well as for minor offences, and the number of the several offences which might be so dealt with is somewhat startling. They are enumerated as follows:—Under the head of branding or marking, one thousand; nose-slitting, one thousand; maiming, five hundred; mutilating, three hundred; and beheading, two hundred! Well was it that the judges were warned "to act with deliberation, to keep well within the limits of the law, and ever to temper justice with mercy."

The emperor's peroration, with which the decree—as given in the "Shoo-King"—closes, is worthy of reproduction. It runs as follows:—

"O ye, my great nobles and high officers of state, I exhort you to be, above all things, careful that you act with due deliberation. I speak on this matter with some diffidence, but I can truly say that, in awarding punishments, it would be impossible for any one to have exercised greater caution than I have done, neither have I ever forgotten that I am but a minister appointed to execute the divinely established decrees of Heaven. Be ye, then, careful, when sitting on the judgment-seat, that your motives

are pure, and your actions above suspicion. Condemn not unless the evidence is clear and convincing. Do not be satisfied with the evidence of a single witness, and even when it is corroborated, beware of being influenced by partiality or private feeling. With regard to the money received in commutation of punishment, never allow yourselves to consider it as a source of profit to the State; but bethink ye that it represents an accumulated mass of crime with all its attendant misery and shame. When you have to receive it, do so in fear and trembling, in the consciousness that, though man has fallen to so low a state, the decrees of Heaven remain immutable; and remember that, had its judgments been unduly severe, not only would the world have been left without good government, but the condition of those condemned to live in it would have been rendered insupportable."

The emperor was evidently aware, when promulgating this revised code, that he had placed a terrible weapon in the hands of his ministers, which would require to be wielded with great skill and discrimination.

But terrible and widely sweeping as the criminal code may appear to have been, it had to be completed by further enactments. It was a leading principle with the ancient lawgivers—not confined to the Chinese—that, in order to deter evil-doers, it was

necessary to pile terror upon terror. Hence it was further decreed that in the case of rebellion against the sovereign, the whole of the culprit's family, extending over five generations, should be included in his punishment; for overt acts against a magistrate or other official, four generations only were to be included; for unnatural crimes, three generations; for sacrilege, two; and for unjustifiable homicide, the penalty was death, without the power of mitigation or remission of the punishment.

Such are some of the leading features of the laws which Confucius had been called upon to administer. It is clear that they were framed in a manner which would encourage an unscrupulous judge to enrich himself by peculation, and make it very difficult for an honest one to act so as to avoid the taint of suspicion. Much of the opprobrium which rests on the mandarins in the present day, is probably to be traced to this cause, and to their being the inheritors of a system which not only exposes them to frequent temptation, but has handed down a number of questionable precedents, which are but too often readily followed.

The wide difference which existed between the spirit and the letter of these laws, must have always made their administration extremely difficult, and there is no better proof of the divergent interpreta-

tions of which they were capable, than the arguments used by Confucius when vindicating himself from the charge of illegality which had been brought against him.

He began by setting forth that "the exemption of the nobles and high dignitaries of state from the ordinary application of the penal laws, was based upon the assumption that the men destined to occupy such honourable and prominent positions would be found superior to the faults and failings of those who had not enjoyed the advantages belonging to birth and fortune. That exemption had also been made from a desire to place the ruling classes before the public in such a light as would cause them to be regarded with special veneration; and this idea was so carefully guarded, that it was customary, when a member of this privileged body had committed some offence, which would have brought a less-favoured individual under the arm of the law, to speak of it allegorically, so as to shield, as far as possible, the order to which the perpetrator belonged from the shame attached to it.

"But the framers of the laws, in their wisdom, had never contemplated that these high-placed offenders should enjoy perfect immunity from punishment. On the contrary; and the difference was simply this. It was decreed that in the event of any crime being brought

home to one who was exempt from the jurisdiction of the ordinary tribunals, he was to adjudicate upon it himself, and it was left to his own sense of honour to award a befitting punishment. Thus, should he perchance have committed some act which would have rendered him liable, under ordinary circumstances, to the punishment of death, he would at once appear as his own accuser before the criminal tribunal, and, after having made a full confession of his guilt and established it by evidence, he would solicit the judge to obtain the royal permission for him to inflict on himself the punishment due to his crime. Then the judge, after having duly exhorted him, would proceed to the court to lay the matter before the sovereign, whilst the self-accused criminal, having arrayed himself in mourning robes, with a white cap on his head, and having his sword, washed in holy water from the sacrificial temple, in his hand, would place himself outside the palace gates and await his return. When the judge reappeared he would kneel before him with his face turned towards the north, and when the judge said, 'Our common master has deigned to sanction your request,' he would fall upon his sword and so kill himself.

"So it was in the olden time. But, by degrees, the simplicity of life which belonged to our forefathers became corrupted, and this, together with many other

good customs, fell into disuse. The laws, as originally established, were carefully thought out and adjusted ; but, as matters now stand, he who would seek to carry them out in accordance with the spirit in which they were framed, will, in frequent instances, have to avoid a too servile adherence to the letter."

Confucius next proceeded to show that, under the altered circumstances belonging to the time, it had become necessary to make an example, which would in some measure atone for the laxity of the past, and give evidence that, in the future, it would be impossible for any criminal, no matter what his rank might be, to escape the consequences of his crimes. And then, in order to make his vindication more complete, he declared that, "had he acted in accordance with the strict letter of the law, as advocated by his opponents, he should have exercised even greater severity, and, instead of confining himself to the execution of a single offender, have extended the sentence, not only to the culprit's family, but to his whole race, as a close adherence to the law would have clearly empowered him to have done."

There is a tone of apology pervading this defence, which gives rise to a suspicion that, in his own mind, Confucius was not quite satisfied that he had kept within the strictly legal limits of his authority. But, although he might not have accepted the dictum

that "the end justifies the means," he was quite confident of having acted rightly, for the object he had sought for was fully attained. He had become master of the situation, and though he might not have succeeded in completely silencing a few cavillers, he had terrified the criminal and overawed the disaffected. To do good, he must have power; and it mattered little if, in order to obtain it, he had slightly overstepped the legal limits of his authority.

The fruits of the minister's masterful policy soon became apparent. The people, who had hitherto been ground down by the exactions of the nobles, became prosperous and contented, and so marked was the improvement in the condition of the state of Loo that it attracted the attention of the neighbouring sovereigns.

They were not disposed to regard this change with any great favour, for, much as Confucius might love peace in the abstract, he was too wise a statesman to neglect the means by which he could best assure it. The forces of Loo were strengthened and reorganized, so that the power of the state had increased with its prosperity.

The feeling of jealousy and apprehension which this excited was very natural. To the Prince of Tsē, it was especially annoying that he who had caused this great progress in an adjoining state should have been

a man whose services he had repeatedly refused. His state had been the strongest of the two, and it had been the work of this man to make it the weakest. He became alarmed, and not without cause, for in a short time his fears were justified.

It was not so very long since that, relying on his superior strength, he had seized upon a portion of the territory belonging to the Prince of Loo and added it to his dominions. Now, that prince, acting upon the suggestion of Confucius, and in all the confidence of his newly acquired power, demanded its restitution, and did so in terms which showed that, if his demand were not complied with, he was ready to enforce it. The Prince of Tsē, not daring to have recourse to arms, and finding there was no possible way of evading that which was little less than a peremptory summons, proposed that a meeting should take place between him and the Prince of Loo, in order that some amicable settlement might be arrived at. This was agreed to, and the level summit of a conical hill close to the frontier was selected by the Prince of Loo as the most convenient place for the interview.

Meantime, the Prince of Tsē, giving ear to evil counsels, had secretly drawn together a large army, which was so posted that, at a given signal, it could quickly surround the place of meeting, his idea being

that if he could only obtain possession of the person of the Prince of Loo, he would be able to make his own terms. But this treacherous intention was defeated by the prudence and foresight of Confucius, who, whether from his knowledge of the small reliance which could be placed on the Prince of Tsē's professions, or from his having obtained information respecting his military preparations, had taken the precaution of ordering that, in addition to the strong armed escort which accompanied his sovereign, a considerable force of picked troops, under the command of the martial Tsze-loo, should be massed within striking distance. The moment the Prince of Tsē became aware of this, he decided upon giving up all idea of hostile measures, and determined to gain his ends by more subtle and, possibly, more certain means.

Upon the level summit of the hill appointed for the interview, an immense temporary building had been erected, containing a vast hall, richly decorated, in which were placed two thrones facing each other, for the rival sovereigns. The approach to this building was by three separate avenues or, rather, flights of steps, so arranged as to make the ascent as easy as possible.

The Prince of Tsē was the first to arrive. He was accompanied by a large number of richly dressed

courtiers and a considerable force of well-armed soldiers; but, in order to emphasize the peaceful nature of his intentions, he brought in his train a numerous troupe of comedians. Probably on account of the greater distance to be traversed, it was some days later before the arrival of the Prince of Loo. This prince came in great state, preceded by three hundred war-chariots, whilst the dust in the distance gave evidence of the near proximity of the main body of his army, which had been placed under the command of Tsze-loo.

Nothing could exceed the cordiality and deference with which he was received by the Prince of Tsĕ, who conceded him the place of hŏnour, as the sovereign of a state of more ancient creation than his own, and lost no time in giving evidence of the sincerity of the friendly sentiments to which he had given expression, by declaring that he was ready, without entering upon any further discussion, to accede to all his demands. Towards Confucius he showed the most amiable condescension; and, whilst greeting him as an old friend, there was not a trace of annoyance or irritation at the success of a policy which had placed him in so humiliating a position. Not the less, he did not despair of regaining, on some fitting opportunity, all he had lost; and he knew that the surest way to effect this would be, as a first

step, to find some means for bringing about the disgrace of the great minister.

He was well aware of the true nature of the Prince of Loo's character. He knew that although that prince was well-intentioned and had possessed sufficient discernment to enable him to appreciate the great qualities of Confucius and to turn them to a profitable account, he was thoroughly weak and voluptuous, and, like most sensualists, better disposed to admire virtue in others than to practise it himself. He suspected too, as was really the case, that he had become weary of the strict attention to public affairs which his great mentor required from him, and that he was only awaiting some suitable pretext, in order that he might free himself from a yoke which was daily becoming insupportable.

It was to carry out these views that he had so readily changed his tactics; and now, in order the better to carry them out, he proposed that he should be allowed to celebrate the happy termination of an unfortunate difference in a manner which would accord with the renewed feelings of friendship which had been established between the two states. The comedians and a troupe of dancers were introduced, but, after a time, their conduct and gestures became so wanton and lascivious that Confucius could no longer restrain his anger. He ordered the prince's

guards to drive them off the stage, and, it is said, had one of them instantly executed, on the grounds that such conduct in the royal presence not only outraged the laws of decency, but became an act of high treason.

For the moment it seemed as if the treacherous cunning of the Prince of Tsē had been again frustrated, and when the Prince of Loo returned to his capital the position of Confucius appeared as strong as ever. But, although the Prince of Tsē had been defeated, he had not been discouraged. It was not long before he sent an envoy to the Prince of Loo, begging him to accept, as a slight token of his lasting regard, the present of a bevy of fair damsels who had been selected for their beauty and accomplishments. Instructed as they had been in every alluring art, these girls soon obtained a complete ascendency over a prince who was only too ready to fall a victim to their charms. He withdrew into the inner recesses of his palace, and neglected to perform even the most necessary duties. Confucius remonstrated with him in vain. His representations were treated with an indifference bordering upon contempt; he was too independent and high-minded to continue in a position which compromised his dignity and exposed him alike to the pity of his friends and the jeers of his enemies, and he deter-

mined to resign. But, reluctant to vacate a post which gave him a power for doing good he could not hope for in private life, he decided upon making one more effort. The season for the celebration of the great annual sacrifice was drawing near, and he had hopes that the solemnity of the occasion might have the effect of bringing back the prince to a proper sense of the serious responsibilities which belonged to his exalted position. But, when the time came and he saw how carelessly and irreverently the prince hurried through the sacred rite, and that he neglected to send round portions of the offerings to the several ministers according to the usual custom, he sent in his resignation, and immediately, though slowly and regretfully, retired from the court, after a period of nearly four years in office, during two of which he had occupied one of the highest and most responsible positions in the state.

He had made a good use of his opportunities; many useful reforms had been inaugurated; the power of the state had been developed; and the condition of the people had been greatly ameliorated. He had caused the laws to be respected, and he had effected, in a short space of time, a marvellous change in the moral conditions of society. On the other hand, whilst his name had become a household word in the mouths of the masses, he had made many

enemies and alienated some of his best friends. The nobles hated him for having been the means of curtailing their privileges, and there is little doubt but that much of the prince's action towards him was due to their promptings; for, though the nobles were in ordinary times divided into three several factions, following the lead of three great rival families who were perpetually intriguing against each other and struggling for supremacy, it was only natural, when occasion came, that they should combine to encompass the overthrow of a minister who had sacrificed the interest of their class to that of the general good of his country.

So it was that Confucius, now in his fifty-sixth year, turned himself away sadly and sorrowfully from his native state. It is said that he lingered on his road, hoping that he might be recalled; but fate had decreed that many years should elapse before he should again set eyes upon the scenes which had become so dear to him.

In thus withdrawing from public life, Confucius gave another proof of how little he allowed his actions to be influenced by personal considerations, and this gave rise to the saying, in after years, "Of all men none knew so well as Confucius when to accept office, how long to remain in it, and when to resign it."

Yet, during his lifetime, the purity of his motives was frequently called in question, and many were to be found ready to accuse him of an undue love of office. This charge was most frequently brought against him by those who had themselves retired into private life, through their disgust at finding themselves obliged to take a part in carrying out the details of a corrupt system, which they found themselves unequal to contend against or alter; and it is not difficult to understand the misconstruction they would be likely to place on the fact that there were times when, under similar circumstances, Confucius had considered it compatible with a conscientious performance of his duties to retain office.

He was himself quite aware of the existence of this feeling against him, and, whilst strenuously defending himself from the imputations of his accusers, he was unsparing in his censure of those who so readily allowed themselves to be discouraged, instead of remaining at their posts, and striving to arrest the stream of corruption, which would otherwise flow on without interruption.

The following anecdote is related in connection with this subject:—"One day, when Confucius was driving out in his chariot, on coming to a river and not being able to find a ford, he sent one of his attendants to make inquiries of two men who were

working in a distant field. They asked his master's name, and, on being told, said, 'How is it possible you can serve a man who, when his country is plunged in the deepest misery and corruption, condescends to compromise his principles by seeking for office, instead of preferring a life of laborious and honest obscurity as we have done?' Having said this, they resumed their ploughing. When this was reported to Confucius, he exclaimed, 'Alas, alas! it is with men, and not with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, that I have to deal with. It is because all does not go on as it should do in this world, that it has become necessary for me to try and reform it.'"

From this it is easy to understand why he withdrew from his native state with such reluctance. The slowness with which he travelled was in strong contrast to the haste which had previously marked his movements when returning in obedience to his sovereign's summons; and his biographers are fond of alluding to the fact as a circumstance deserving of special commendation.

It was as a mournful, melancholy, disappointed man that Confucius moved slowly on. He knew that for some unknown space of years he was to be an exile, and those who were with him, for he still had many followers, moved along sadly and silently

in his train. When they had crossed the confines of Wei, a state to the westward of Loo, including that portion of the territory of modern China where the provinces of Honan and Chĭ-lē come together, he turned to take a last look at his native land, but it was shut out from view by the mountains. "Ah,"—he exclaimed in mournful accents—

"My native land,
I seek in vain
To catch one glimpse
Of thee again.
The cruel mountains shut thee out from view,
And every step doth my deep grief renew.

"A forest screen
Had given perchance
A hope of some
Through piercing glance.
An axe had helped; but rocks no axe could fell.
Lost to my sight, dear land of home—farewell."

And again—it would seem that the weather was wet and gloomy—

"The cold chill rain falls thick and fast,
Sweeps thro' the vale the bitter blast.
A bride is borne across the plain,
She ne'er shall see her home again;
I, too, am borne away from home
Against my will, compelled to roam.
Ye powers of Heaven, look down from high
With pity on my misery;
All, all is dark! In vain I've striven,
No blessing on my work was given.
Men now but seek for wealth and power,
And live but in the present hour.
No gleam of hope breaks through the gloom
To light my footsteps towards the tomb."

In the depth of his despair Confucius had evidently forgotten the advice he had given years before, when making his first journey into Tsē, to the would-be suicide, whose life he had saved, "Take heart, and remember, so long as there is life there is hope."

CHAPTER IX.

In exile.

IT was in the year B.C. 496 that Confucius took up his residence at the capital of the principality of Wei. Its ruler is described—and it is singular to observe how many of the princes fall under the same category—as a "worthless, dissipated man;" but he, not the less, gave Confucius a hospitable reception, and assigned him a yearly allowance of sixty thousand measures of grain. By this time the great teacher had recovered his composure. Change of scene and the incidents of travel seem always to have exercised a beneficial influence upon him, and the natural buoyancy of his temperament rendered him proof against any long-continued attacks of depression. His energy had increased, rather than diminished, with years, and he lost no time in returning to his favourite studies. He had, besides, a secret hope that he might find in one of the neighbouring states some

public position which might compensate him for the manner in which he had been treated in his own.

For he held on as tenaciously as ever to the practicability of applying his principles so as to improve the conduct, and add to the happiness, of those who might live under a government regulating its action by them. Of this he was sanguine. Nevertheless he had moments of discouragement, when, remembering his many failures, he would exclaim, "I do not murmur against the decrees of Heaven, or seek to lay the blame on my fellow-men; but my motives are misunderstood. I but strive to enforce a clearer conception of the higher duties of our nature, by using the means which Nature herself has afforded me, yet, alas! alas! it is by Heaven alone that I am comprehended."

He remained nearly a twelvemonth in Wei, and would have probably remained there longer, had it not been for an incident by which his disciples were greatly scandalized. The wife of the Prince of Wei was a woman of such a notoriously bad character that she was universally execrated. One day the prince, having invited Confucius to accompany him on an excursion into the country, drove through the streets of his capital with his wife by his side, whilst Confucius followed in another chariot. When the people saw him they shouted out, "Look, there goes

vice driving in front, with virtue following behind!" The sage saw at once that he had been placed in a false position, and determined upon seeking some other refuge.

It was whilst travelling towards the South, on the borders of the principality of Sung, that one day, being weary, he dismounted from his chariot and seated himself in the shade of a wide-spreading tree. In order to pass the time profitably, he began to explain to his disciples the origin and intention of the various rites. Whilst so occupied, an officer of high military rank, in the service of the Prince of Sung, passed by. He no sooner saw Confucius, towards whom he entertained an intense dislike, than he drew his sword and rushed towards him, with the intention of killing him. Fortunately the philosopher caught sight of him in time, and, retaining his presence of mind, effected his escape. His companions were panic-stricken, and impatient of their master's calmness, less perhaps on his account than on their own, urged him to greater speed. "Why should I hasten?" replied Confucius; "if Heaven protects me, why need I care for this man's anger?" This answer did not reassure his friends; perhaps they felt themselves unworthy of participation in Heaven's favour, for they dispersed and fled. Left to himself, and driven from the right road, Confucius directed his

steps to the capital of the state of Ching, which he reached so utterly exhausted that he was obliged to sit down on a stone outside the city gates. Here he was seen by some of the inhabitants, who informed one of his disciples, who had arrived before him, that a man of noble and majestic mien was sitting outside the city, so travel-stained and weary that he looked like a tired dog who had lost his master. On this description being repeated to Confucius by the disciple, who, suspecting the stranger could be no other than his master, had at once hastened to him, he was greatly amused, and declared that, whatever exaggeration there might be with respect to the manner in which he was described, there could be no doubt as to the truth of that portion of it which declared him to be like a homeless and tired dog.

Four years after his departure from Loo, the prince died, and it seemed at first as if his great wish to return was to be gratified. But his patience had yet to be tried by many more weary years of exile.

A year later, when travelling with some of his disciples in what is now the eastern portion of Honan, their supplies having fallen short, he and his companions were reduced to the last extremity for want of food. When those around him gave way to murmurs and lamentations, Confucius remained unmoved, and even played on the lute and sang, as was his

habit under more favourable circumstances. Instead of encouraging, this gave great offence to his fellow-sufferers. One of them, indeed, could not refrain from upbraiding him, and asking whether it could possibly be right for any one to play and sing when those around him were dying of hunger. "Know you not," replied the sage, "that music is the means which the superior man employs to keep down the cravings of his animal nature when they strive to obtain a mastery over him?" Another proof of the high estimation in which music was held by him.

It has already been shown how music, as the second of the six liberal arts, had been studied and reduced to a system in the early days of the empire. But in the time of Confucius it was supposed to have greatly deteriorated from the state of perfection to which it had been brought in the halcyon days of the immortal Shun, when the sweetness of its notes gave harmonious indication of the gentle and benign disposition of the ruler, and of the happiness and content of the people over whom he ruled. It was supposed to have become harsher in proportion as the empire had been weakened by internal discord; and a relish for these ruder strains was regarded by Confucius as a certain indication of the moral declension of the national character. Hence it was that it became a cherished object with him to re-establish a

taste for those pure and lofty strains which had set a stamp upon the music of the golden age. According to his theory, the extension of such a taste would not only indicate an unmistakable advance in moral culture, but would be one of the surest methods to produce it. "It is impossible," he once said, "for a vicious man to be a good musician."

It is doubtful whether the experiences of the age in which we live would lead to the same conclusion.

He continued to move about from state to state until, some four years after his departure from Wei, we find him at the capital of the principality of Tsoo, which now forms part of Hoo-pĭh, where he attracted the favourable notice of the sovereign, and it was, again, only through the intervention of his ministers that he was prevented from giving him the government of a large district. "How," said they, "can it be safe for you to place a man in a prominent position who has amongst his disciples three such men as Tsze-kung, Yen-hwui, and Tsze-loo? There is not an officer in your Majesty's dominions capable of competing with them. With the aid of such men as these is it likely he will employ his power for no other purpose than to benefit the state of Tsoo? Do not forget how Woo and Wan, although they were but the heirs of some hundred le, were able to make themselves masters of the empire. Let your Majesty

be warned." The prince had not the courage to act in opposition to this advice, and on his death, which took place within the same year, Confucius decided upon leaving Tsoo and returning to Wei.

In the mean time, great changes had taken place in that state. Its prince had died four years before, soon after the departure of Confucius, and the succession had devolved on his grandson, his son having been put on one side in consequence of an attempt made upon the life of his mother, the infamous Nan-tsze. An internecine struggle was the consequence, but though many tempting offers were made to induce Confucius to take a part in it, he steadily refused to do so, and he continued for nearly six years without official employment, or taking any active part in public affairs.

His previous wanderings had not been without their use. We have passed over the details connected with many of them, in order to avoid the frequent repetition of all but similar incidents: the same dangers and fatigues; receptions at various minor courts; and conversations in which the same ideas are repeated in almost identical words — a narrative, in fact, made tedious by its monotony. It is sufficient to know that, during the whole period of his exile, his zeal never flagged, and that, in whatever circumstances he might be placed, he exhibited

the same earnestness and steadiness of purpose as before.

It is true that his efforts to induce the rulers of the feudatory states to adopt his principles of government had not met with much success; but his doctrines had nevertheless gained ground, and it is probable that his wandering life had caused them to receive a far wider dissemination than would have been the case if he had succeeded in obtaining office, or had remained fixed at the court of some petty sovereign.

His wanderings had, too, the effect of bringing him into more direct contact with the masses, so that his views had become popularized, and so widely known, that numbers flocked to him for instruction from all parts of the empire. It may be that he found his pupils more ready to discuss his doctrines than to adopt them in their daily lives; but, when the momentary mortification, which this may have caused, had passed away, he would have had the consolation of knowing that it is only through discussion that any new political or social ideas can be brought within the area of practical action.

In addition to this, in a comparatively rude age, when there were but a few speculative thinkers, any mode which would exercise and bring into play the latent powers of the mind must have been useful;

whilst a protracted course of oral teaching possessed the great advantage, over other and shorter methods, of enabling Confucius to place his doctrines before his hearers in a form, which would better ensure their being preserved and handed down in all their integrity.

Within a year of his return to Wei, he had to mourn over the loss of his favourite disciple, Yen-hwui; and a few years later, in the sixty-sixth year of his age, and the eleventh of his exile, he suddenly received the intelligence of the death of his wife. Some forty years had rolled by since their separation, yet he was deeply moved. Perhaps some long-slumbering recollections were awakened of the youthful bride of his spring-tide days—those distant days which in age seem as yesterday. Could it be that the bright young being, which his fancy so vividly recalled, had become old and had died? "Yes"—said Confucius, as if in answer to his own thoughts—"her span of existence is terminated, and it will not be long before mine comes to an end."

Perhaps it was under the influence of these melancholy reflections, that he looked with longing eyes towards the state he loved so well. His residence in Wei had become distasteful to him. He had been asked to take part in a personal feud, which he resented as beneath his dignity, and he was just about

to remove into some other state, saying, "It is the bird which chooses the tree, not the tree the bird," when messengers arrived, bearing appropriate gifts, and a message from Gae, Prince of Loo, inviting him to return. This was in the year B.C. 483, and in the thirteenth year of his exile.

Confucius was sixty-nine years old when he turned his now faltering footsteps towards his fatherland. Since he had last left it, death had been busy amongst his opponents, whilst time had done much to mitigate, if it had not quite done away with, the hostile feelings of those who remained. There is reason, too, for believing that its softening influence, and the lessons learnt in adversity, had not been without effect on Confucius himself, and that, if his conviction of the truth of his opinions was as strong as ever, he had learnt to advance them with greater moderation. He had grown calmer in his old age, and the excitement and turmoil of public life had lost its charm. Although he entered freely into conversation with the prince and his ministers, he ceased to endeavour to influence their opinions, or to regain any of the power he had once possessed. Indeed, with the exception of an attempt to elevate the tone of the national music, his withdrawal from any participation in state affairs was final and complete.

Every moment of his time was now spent in putting

the final touches to the revision and collocation of the ancient classics, and in conversing with his friends and disciples, on those all-absorbing topics which had reference to the right performance of man's higher duties. And so, we shall find, he continued to be a teacher to the very end, giving grandiloquent utterance to those ideas which, however commonplace they may seem to us, procured for him, amongst succeeding millions of his fellow-countrymen, the lofty title of "The most holy teacher of ancient times."

But his joyousness of spirit had departed, for Age was beginning to lay his hand heavily upon him.

CHAPTER X.

Last days and death.

OLD age had come at last. The bright day-dreams, which had inspired the philosopher's youthful efforts, had, as we have seen, been long since dissipated by the experience of his riper years; yet he had continued to work on cheerfully and hopefully. But now that the infirmities of old age began to press more and more heavily upon him, the occasional fits of depression, to which he had always been subject, became more frequent, and in those dark days he saw, or fancied he saw, that his long life of laborious endeavour had been but a failure. It seemed to him that just at the moment when his preparations for the task had been made complete, and he had become most capable of executing it, his strength had failed him, and that he had been reminded by the inexorable hand of time, of the few moments of existence which still remained to separate him from that dark interval "when none can work."

True that his doctrines had been spread throughout the empire, and that, whilst thousands of inquiring minds were pondering upon them, a chosen band of faithful friends hung upon his words with reverential love, storing them up in their memories as sacred treasures to be conferred, as the most precious of all gifts, upon succeeding ages.

But Confucius had looked for more immediate fruits than these from the wide extension of his doctrines. His great aim had been to accomplish a reform, as rapid as comprehensive, in the moral and social condition of his fellow-countrymen. He had been buoyed up by his naturally sanguine spirit, so long as he had retained health and strength, but, now that these had departed, a sense of sadness took possession of him. After a whole life spent in scattering the seed, it was a bitter disappointment to him, at its close, to find that, for him, there was to be no ripening grain, no gathered harvest.

Within a year of his return to Loo, another great sorrow fell upon him, in the death of his only son. Of this son but little mention is made; not that he had proved himself unworthy of it, but because his individuality was obscured by his having lived immediately under the shadow of his father's greatness. Even in the "Dialogues," his name only occurs a few times. He left a child, a son, named Kung-keih,

who lived to occupy a distinguished place amongst the compilers of the classical literature.

Though Confucius caused his son to be buried with all the ceremonial belonging to the sacred rites, he insisted upon everything being done as simply as possible; and when, soon after, on the death of one of his disciples, his companions, in direct opposition to his wishes, had him buried with great pomp, he rebuked them for having done so, reminding them that, through their thoughtless action, he had been prevented from placing him on the same footing as his own child.

The slightest incident was now sufficient to inspire him with melancholy reflections; and he would often take his lute and lament in plaintive strains the weakness of man's nature and the instability of earthly things. It is thus, we are told, that, as he one evening passed a mound, said to have been formed by the ruins of a monument, erected in commemoration of a victory gained near the spot, at a period so remote that most of the circumstances connected with it had been forgotten, he was so struck with the practical illustration it afforded, to what was then occupying his own thoughts, that he seized his lute and improvised as follows:—

"Ah, woe is me! Whatever meets mine eye
Speaks to the soul and tells me all must die.
So it is ruled.

"The very life which genial summers brings,
Preludes the death which from cold winter springs.
Ah me! Ah me!

"Yon sun, which heralded the birth of day,
Sinks in the west, and with its parting ray
Comes ebon night.

"Behold this shapeless mound! The closest scan
Will fail to recognize the work of man.
So all decays.

"And he who raised it, with his conquering host?
We know him not, his very name is lost.
Ah me! Ah me!

"Can man, then, hope to light a quenchless flame,
To live for ever linked with endless fame?
Oh, idle thought!

"Summer returns, chill winter hides his head,
The sun once more tints the grey morn with red,
The ebon night is turned to brightest day,
Back to the river Ocean yields his prey,
So on for ever.

"But when man leaves this world, he comes no more,
Behind is all he loves—he knows not what before,
All, all is dark."

Can we not picture to ourselves the venerable philosopher, as he stands with his face lighted up by the last rays of the setting sun and the inspiration of poetical enthusiasm, his voice becoming more and more tremulous as the sun sinks and the twilight darkens, till, with broken accents, and with a wail

rather than a note, he ends his song amid the silence and blackness of night.

This depth of melancholy seems to have become his habitual mood, when any circumstance might arise, to force him to extend his thoughts beyond the limits of this present life. He felt that all beyond was enshrouded in mystery and darkness. We have seen how deeply he was moved by his conversation with Laou-tsze, and it does not appear as if, since then, his views with respect to the supernatural had become either clearer or stronger. Confident as he was in himself as a teacher, unfolding the glories of the past, and applying its wisdom to the present, when he stood before the future, it seemed as if he were overwhelmed with a sense of his utter weakness and incompetency.

In his seventieth year he had retained sufficient physical power to enable him to pay a last visit to the lofty Tae-shan. On this occasion he astonished those who were with him by the vigour he displayed in the ascent, and by his having been able to recognize objects in the far distance from its summit, which they were unable to discern.

On his return from this expedition he decided upon commemorating the completion of his great literary work, the compilation and arrangement of the sacred books or "King," by offering up a sacrifice to the

Heavenly powers in gratitude for his having been permitted to bring his labours to a conclusion. When he had publicly done this, he assembled his disciples and addressed them for the last time. He reminded them that, as all intellectual gifts are of diverse nature, and distributed in unequal proportions, it was incumbent on each one of them, to endeavour to find out in what particular direction his special aptitudes might lie, in order that he might make the best possible use of his talents. He warned them of the great mistakes—indeed, disastrous failures—which are often the consequence of neglecting this most necessary precaution. He then recapitulated their duties, and proceeded to distribute them, according to the individual capacity of his hearers, so as to ensure that they might be performed in the best possible manner. He finally took leave of them, declaring that his mission as a teacher had come to an end, and that he wished them, from that moment, to look upon him as a friend, and not as a master.

An anecdote which belongs to this time shows that age, although it may have chilled, had not destroyed his genial and sympathetic nature. Having gone to witness a village festival, given in honour of the spirits of the elements, which marked the closing labours of the harvest, he could not conceal the pleasure he felt in seeing the happiness of the people,

which manifested itself in rude and boisterous merriment. This seems to have somewhat scandalized his companions, who remarked that it would have been much better, if the villagers, instead of giving way to such an indecent exhibition of joy, had solemnly expressed their gratitude for past benefits, and offered up their prayers for future blessings. But this view met with no encouragement from Confucius. "Do you not see," he said, "that they are doing both, for it is in this rude and simple manner, that their submission to the decrees of Heaven, and gratitude for its bounty, is most naturally shown? Do not be too hasty in your judgments; unceasing toil has made them incapable of participating in the higher privileges of our being, and it is but just that the peasant, after a period of unremitting labour, should have one day, in which he may throw off all restraint, and enjoy himself in his own fashion. The bow which is always bent soon loses its elasticity and becomes useless."

Though he had completely withdrawn from public life and renounced all interference in state affairs, an incident occurred at this time which forced him for a moment from his retirement. The news arrived of the assassination of the Prince of Tsē, and Confucius, filled with horror at a crime which he regarded as little less than sacrilege, thought it his duty to endeavour to induce the Prince of Loo, to take

instant vengeance on his murderers. Putting on his ceremonial robes, he hurried to the court, where the prince, receiving him with apparent cordiality and putting him off with fair words, referred him to his ministers, or, rather, to the corrupt and time-serving courtiers, into whose hands the executive authority had fallen. These secretly sympathized with the party by whom the Prince of Tsē had been put to death. They therefore gave it as their opinion that, under existing circumstances, it would be highly impolitic for the Prince of Loo to interfere in the domestic concerns of another state.

Confucius withdrew deeply mortified, for, with his exalted idea of the divine right of princes, he considered it to be the duty of every honest man to show his detestation of so heinous a crime, by taking strong and immediate action against those who had perpetrated it. He had made a last effort and failed, but better failure than having to reproach himself for supineness in such a cause. The shame of his defeat did not belong to him, but to others.

When Confucius had left Wei on his return to Loo, two of his disciples, one of them being the martial Tsze-loo, had remained behind in the service of that state. Tsze-loo had endeared himself to his master by his bold and manly character, though he often laid himself open to rebuke by the freedom with which he

expressed his thoughts. Soon after the departure of Confucius, a rebellion broke out in Wei, and, the rebels being victorious, Tsze-loo, who had fought bravely on the prince's side, rather than encounter the disgrace of defeat killed himself, whilst his companions sought safety in flight. When Confucius heard of his death he was affected to tears. He had learnt, by bitter experience, that one of the penalties belonging to old age is, to mourn over the death of friends.

His naturally iron constitution now began to give way, and, as he grew weaker, his mind seemed to become more and more deeply impressed by every incident which a superstitious fancy could turn into a portent of his approaching end. A dream, in which he saw his tomb between two columns, filled him with gloomy forebodings; he became melancholy and despondent; he brooded ceaselessly over his many failures; over the degeneracy of the age, and the impotency of his efforts to reform it. Music still had its charm, and it was to the accompaniment of his lute that he often poured forth his sad thoughts, in a mournful and pathetic strain. Thus it was that he sang, in broken tremulous tones—

"The Tae-shan, crumbling, falls.
These weary eyes in vain
Seek for its lofty top.

"The beams, destroyed by age,
Support the roof no more,
And shelter there is none.

"The withered herbage dies,
And on the cold bare ground
Must rest these weary limbs.

"All that is pure and great
The world would fain regret,
And I—what have I done?

"Ah! Who, when I am gone,
Striving as I have striven,
Will work at this sad task?"

It was soon after he had given utterance to these sombre reflections that the Prince of Loo, when out hunting, came upon an extraordinary animal of an unknown species, which died immediately after its capture. It is described as a quadruped having fleshy protuberances in the place of horns, scales all over the body like those of a dragon, and the feet of a stag. The prince's huntsmen brought it home, and cast it down in a public place near the palace, where vast crowds came to see it. The singular appearance of the animal gave rise to much speculation, and, in a short time, little else was talked of. When an account of this wonderful creature was brought to Confucius, his curiosity was aroused, and he went to see it; but no sooner had he cast his eyes upon it than he showed signs of the greatest consternation, and would have

fallen to the ground, had not his friends supported him. "It is the ke-lin, the ke-lin!" he cried, in a voice broken with emotion, "that sacred animal, typical of all that is good and holy; and, behold it is dead! What evil does not this presage to the empire? And to me, what does this omen portend? The ke-lin, living, gave notice of my approaching birth. Does it not now seem as if its lifeless body had been sent to warn me that the moment of the great separation is drawing nigh?"

Though thus convinced that his days were numbered, some short interval elapsed before the great end came. In that interval there were moments when his old energy seemed to return to him, and he would endeavour to put some last touches to the works upon which he had devoted so much labour. Indeed, it was as if his last thoughts were concentrated upon them, it may be in the hope that through their instrumentality his name, and what he had sought to do, might obtain some lasting record which would keep him in the remembrance of his fellow-countrymen.

But the sands of life were nearly run out, and, soon after he had entered his seventy-third year, he sank into a profound lethargy, from which he never recovered. His death took place in the fourth month of the sixteenth year of Gae-kung, Prince of Loo, and

the forty-first of King-wang, the twenty-fifth emperor of the dynasty of Chow, B.C. 479.

Through his grandson, Kung-keih, the succession has been continued through nearly seventy generations, and the many thousand Chinese at the present day, who lay claim to a direct descent from the great philosopher, can boast of being in possession of an authentic genealogy, which can probably be traced back through more centuries than that of any other family in the world.

These descendants of Confucius, who are most numerous in that part of Shan-tung in which his native state of Loo was situated, still enjoy many privileges and immunities, and are the only subjects in the empire, not being of royal blood, in whom the title of nobility is allowed to be hereditary.

His disciples decided that their great master should be buried in a manner suitable for one who had gained for himself such a position of pre-eminence. The sole representative of his race, his grandson Kung-keih, being too young to conduct the established funeral rites, two of the disciples were selected to act for him. These, after having closed the eyes of their revered master, and put three small handfuls of rice in his mouth, clothed his remains in a complete suit of ceremonial robes, with his full-dress cap, and official badge attached by a cord formed of twisted

threads, each thread being of a different colour. The body, thus attired, was then placed in a double coffin, the outer one being upwards of four inches in thickness. This was placed, in obedience to the rites established by the reigning dynasty, under a rich canopy, around which, at intervals, were poles bearing triangular flags in accordance with the ritual of the preceding dynasty of Shang, whilst above all floated a large square standard to represent the dominating influence of the ancient dynasty of Hea. Then the two masters of the ceremonies having purchased, in the name of Kung-keih, a plot of ground, to the north of the capital, they raised three cupola-shaped mounds; the central one, which was the largest, being prepared as the final resting-place for the encoffined remains. When all was ready, the whole of the disciples and friends of the deceased philosopher, clad in mourning robes, formed in sad procession and followed his remains, and, with every demonstration of the deepest respect and veneration, deposited them in the tomb, with all befitting ceremony. A tree had previously been planted by his most prominent disciple, Tsze-kung, vestiges of which are still to be seen.

His disciples decided that the time of mourning should be the same as that appointed for a father. But Tsze-kung was not satisfied with this; he built

himself a cabin near the tomb, and lived a life of strict seclusion for six years.

Later on, pilgrimages were made to the spot by disciples from all parts of the empire, who, after going through the prescribed ceremonies, embellished the tomb with trees which they had brought with them from their own homes. One hundred of these pilgrims formed a settlement in the neighbourhood which received the name of Kung-te, and constituted themselves of their own accord vassals of Kung-keih, to whom they rendered homage as the representative of their illustrious master.

The Prince of Loo, on hearing of the sage's death, was struck with remorse for having so neglected him during his life. "Alas!" he cried, "Heaven in its anger has deprived the state of its most precious treasure—for Confucius was its glory and chief ornament."

As a compensation for his neglect, he erected a tablet of honour near the sage's tomb, and within the monument, of which this formed part, he deposited a copy of his writings, together with his portrait, his ceremonial robes, his instruments of music, the chariot in which he had made so many journeys, and portions of the furniture which he had habitually used. When all was completed, the prince came and did homage before the sage's shrine, thus setting an example

which has been followed for more than two thousand years, not only by the bulk of the nation, but by each successive emperor as its representative, commencing with the founder of the dynasty of Han, about two hundred years before our era. From this time, that which had previously been little more than an act of homage came to be regarded as a religious rite, established by imperial authority and performed in countless temples erected in honour of the great teacher in every town within the limits of the empire.

Not content with raising monuments and temples in his honour, the successive dynasties vied with each other in bestowing posthumous titles upon one who was now regarded as a departed saint. By the Prince of Loo he was spoken of as "The Great Father;" under the dynasty of Han he was raised to the dignity of a duke; in the succeeding one of Thang he received the designations of "the first of Saints," and "the royal Preacher," his statue being clad in royal robes, and a crown placed upon its head; under the Ming dynasty he was entitled "the most holy, the most wise, and the most virtuous of Teachers," and it is in these terms that he is recognized by the reigning Tartar dynasty.

Soon after his death, an attempt was made to unite his disciples, under the lead of one of their number, who bore, both in person and manner, a marked re-

semblance to their departed master; but it failed, principally through the opposition of one of the sage's favourite followers, Tsang-tsze, who declared tnat teaching, which had been so comprehensive and complete, could not be improved or added to, and that to attempt to do either would be as vain as to endeavour to add purity to that which had been washed in the waters of the Kiang-nan, and bleached in the rays of the autumn sun.

It was through the instrumentality of his disciples, however, that the chief portion of his doctrines were brought together and transmitted to posterity in the "four books," of which a *résumé* will be given later on. But for this, much that he had taught, would have been obscured or lost, for his mode of teaching was almost entirely oral. He himself, however, had always regarded the writings he had collated from ancient sources, as being of far greater value, as a means of instruction, than any *vivâ-voce* teaching, and it was upon them he had built his hopes of future fame.

To us, who have to consider his life and teaching as a whole, it is difficult to assign the exact value which is to be attached to any particular portion of it. To do so would require an amount of knowledge, only to be obtained by long-continued and exhaustive study, and it is questionable whether the result would compensate for the labour expended in arriving at it.

CHAPTER XI.

Personal characteristics.

IN person, Confucius was considerably above the middle height, so that he was frequently spoken of as "the tall man." His bearing was dignified and commanding, and his voice full and sonorous. He had a dark complexion; a flat large nose; small but piercing eyes; and an expression of gravity and decision, which at times bordered on sternness, though it was more frequently combined with an air of mildness and benevolence.

Portraits of him are in existence, which are supposed, on a kind of traditionary evidence, to give a faithful delineation of his features; but there are just grounds for scepticism upon this point, and, in any case, it is one best left to the decision of Chinese savants.

Some of the details related in connection with his everyday life are almost absurdly minute, but they are, at the same time, so thoroughly characteristic

that they cannot well be omitted, if we would gain a clear idea of the great philosopher's tastes and mode of life.

For instance, with regard to dress; and it would be as well to note here, that the dress worn by the Chinese in his time was very different from that of the present day, which dates from the Tartar conquest. The ancient dress was more like that worn by the Japanese, who had early adopted the modes of their then more civilized neighbours; the hair, too, was worn in a similar fashion. We find that the ordinary summer wear of Confucius was a robe made of linen; linen, it seems, being in his day more highly esteemed than silk. It is said that, had he consulted his own taste, he would have worn a cap made of the same material, but, unfortunately, it had been a long-established custom for a silken one to be worn, and Confucius was not a man to depart from ancient usages; besides which, a silken cap had the advantage of being more economical.

His winter robes were lined with fur—the yellow robes with that of the fox; the white with deer-skin; and the dark ones with black lamb-skin.

He had a dislike to particular colours, above all to red and brown, so that, in the choice of his clothes, he was somewhat restricted; and he would not allow the collars of his robes to be trimmed with either green or crimson.

It seems that, then, as now, it was the custom to wear the sleeves very long and wide, the hands being completely covered; but Confucius, who found this law of etiquette particularly irksome and inconvenient, allowed himself to depart from it on ordinary occasions to the extent of turning up the sleeve of the right arm.

He never went to court or paid a formal visit without putting on his ceremonial robes; neither did he make a visit of condolence without being clothed in white, which was, as it still is, the garb of mourning.

So careful indeed was he to show the importance which he attached to these outward forms that, when prostrate from sickness, if he received a visit from the prince he had his court robe thrown round him, and he put on his girdle.

This punctiliousness in small matters, did not proceed from mere fancy or caprice, but from principle, for it was one of his maxims that there is nothing so trivial as to be beneath the notice of a well-regulated mind. Thus, as dress has its æsthetics, in common with other, it may be more favoured, creative arts, he would have been acting in contradiction to the spirit of his teaching, had he treated it as a subject unworthy of his attention. "Yes, truly"—we can imagine him to have said—"an indifference to dress indicates, rather, a perverted or uncultivated

taste than an exalted understanding, for these are no mere body coverings, these silken and linen robes, but intelligible external types of the inner being of the wearer; and so the dress adopted by us on the sudden promptings of an idle fancy, may be, after all, a traitor, betraying to the world our hidden weakness."

The "philosophy of clothes" may indeed be said to belong to all ages. In "Sartor Resartus" we find perhaps its latest expression, but for a truly practical illustration of it we must visit China. There every minute detail of dress is clearly indicated, and a departure from regulated forms is not only regarded as a breach of propriety, but as something which borders on profanity. With us this feeling of reverence for particular patterns, hallowed by some association, or through long-continued use, is not unknown, and asserts itself from time to time in earnest controversies with respect to the cut or colour of some sacerdotal garment.

Though naturally abstemious, Confucius was very particular in the choice and preparation of his food. "Sir, I like to dine," was the emphatic declaration of our great lexicographer, and we have only to turn to the pages of the "Dialogues" to see that the Chinese philosopher was in perfect sympathy with him in this matter. He differed from him, however,

in possessing a larger share of fastidiousness. Quality was with him a matter of no small moment, and it is evident that he must have held a bad cook in detestation, for he would not eat of a dish which was badly cooked, or over-done, or out of season. Neither would he partake of anything which was not served up with its appropriate sauce. He had, too, a great dislike to bad carving.

He held ginger in high esteem, eating it with everything, and he is said to have been very careful in the choice of his wine. Of this he drank sparingly, though he did not limit himself to any fixed quantity. At the commencement of each meal he poured out a libation to the celestial powers, and, whilst at table, he was particularly careful to avoid any subject of conversation likely to provoke discussion.

Although fond of good living, he had a great horror of gluttony or gross feeding, for he held that nothing so marred the higher qualities of man's nature, as an undue indulgence in sensuality.

In China, the stomach, not the heart, is looked upon as the seat of the softer emotions. It is only reasonable, then, that more than ordinary care should be taken of the digestive organs. Perhaps, if we paid a little more attention to them ourselves, there would be less misery and unhappiness found in our midst.

Though recognized so many centuries ago by the Chinese, we are only just beginning to find out that the nature of man's dress, and the preparation of his food, are not outside the limits of practical philosophy.

In the presence of his sovereign, we are told that Confucius comported himself with respectful dignity. Towards those of a superior rank, he acted with becoming courtesy; whilst, in his general intercourse with his equals and inferiors, he was invariably straightforward and sincere. A rigid upholder of a strict ceremonial, he found nothing irksome in the formal etiquette of courts, but took a pleasure in personally demonstrating the mode in which the duties of a courtier should be performed.

In picturesque effect, the following description will scarcely suffer, from being brought into comparison with the genuflections, bowings, and backings with which the denizens of this Western world seek, with more loyalty than grace, to render homage to their rulers in this nineteenth century. There was a reality, too, about these ancient ceremonials, which has long departed from our modern ones; for the awe-inspiring effect produced by entering into the presence of a personality believed to be the holder of a divine mandate, and possessed of unlimited power, no longer exists. The elements of extreme veneration and fear are now wanting, and when we descend to the level of

ordinary emotions, it is not long before we find ourselves landed in the commonplace. But to proceed :—

On arriving at the palace, Confucius, avoiding the principal entrance, as if the honour of passing through it were too great for him, entered by a side door, bending down as he did so, as if it were not high enough to admit him when standing at his full height. Then, retaining this bent attitude, and gathering the skirts of his robe close round him, he moved noiselessly up the hall. As he passed the prince's vacant chair, he quickened his pace, his countenance became sensibly agitated, and, if required to speak, he did so as if overpowered by his feelings.

When commanded, at any time, to usher a visitor into the princely presence, he assumed a grave and submissive manner, and, bowing alternately to the right and left, passed hurriedly through the ranks of the officers who lined the hall. As he did so he was very careful not to disarrange his robes by the movement of the clasped hands, which form part of the Chinese mode of salutation. On re-entering, he again walked briskly forward, not bringing his hands together and bowing to alternate sides as before, but raising his arms aloft, and thus spreading out his robe on either side of him like the wings of a bird.

In like manner, when he received the seals of office, his expression became timid and anxious,

he stooped down as if its weight were too great for him, and when he carried it, he walked with faltering and uncertain steps, as if scarcely able to contend against the sense of the heavy responsibilities which had been imposed upon him.

Real or feigned, this expression of emotion could not be omitted. Without it, these frequent court ceremonials, would soon have lost their effect. The ancients, who made it a part of their ritual, had evidently understood how easily a ceremonial falls into contempt unless it can be made impressive, and Confucius, as their interpreter, was not likely to underrate anything which had received their sanction.

It must not be forgotten that the description of court ceremonial which has been just given, refers only to that which etiquette required, from an official of the sage's rank, when entering into the presence of one of the feudatory princes. At the imperial court, a much greater degree of reverence and humility would have been exhibited; probably surpassing that which requires the noble who enters the august presence in the present day, no matter how high his rank, to kneel down, and strike the ground nine times with his forehead.

But the great philosopher's formality of manner was not confined to the precincts of the court. If, at any time, when seated, some one passed by, clad in

mourning, or wearing a ceremonial robe, he instantly rose to testify his sympathy and respect. He acted in a similar manner towards the blind. If, on these occasions, he was driving in his chariot, he made a low obeisance, and, if walking, he quickened his pace—another mode probably of showing a polite deference.

Yet he was by no means formal in his own house. On the contrary, in social intercourse he is said to have been remarkably unceremonious. Nothing, however, offended him more than having to encounter rudeness or discourtesy. On such occasions he could not always restrain his anger, and sometimes his displeasure vented itself in a manner not quite in accordance with the spirit of equanimity which the true philosopher was required to retain under the most trying circumstances, and, it must be confessed, not quite in keeping with the mildness of disposition to which his disciples bear such frequent testimony. Thus, when one day a certain Huen-hwae awaited his approach without rising from his seat to receive him, Confucius was so exasperated that, after rating him soundly and predicting that he would come to a bad end, he raised his staff and struck him across the legs.

The relations between Confucius and his disciples were intimate and friendly. Their veneration for him

was unbounded, and they were never weary of setting him up as an example and model of amiability, integrity, firmness, dignity, politeness, and condescension—indeed, of all the virtues. He, on his side, entertained a very warm affection for those amongst them who possessed a more than ordinary capacity, or who showed, in their daily lives, a desire to conform to those principles of perfect rectitude which occupied so prominent a place in his teaching. When one of them died, he mourned over him as if he had lost a child. "Yen-hwui is dead," he said; "he is lost to me for ever, and where shall I find another capable of filling his place? With him there was no lagging behind, no weariness. He moved ever forward, for he was a true lover of learning, to whom study was a pleasure; but, alas! he is gone, and I shall never find his equal." And, on another occasion, when speaking of him, he said, "Where can be found a brighter example than that which is to be found in the life of Yen-hwui? Although he was so poor that he had to live on rice and water, and had no better shelter than a hovel, he uttered no complaint. Where this poverty would have made other men discontented and miserable, he did not allow his equanimity to be disturbed. Oh, Yen-hwui, Yen-hwui, your virtue was indeed great—so great, that it was not far from being perfect."

Confucius evidently possessed, in a very high degree, one of the most valuable qualifications in a teacher—the power of gaining and preserving the love and admiration of those he taught.

It may interest sportsmen to know, that Confucius was a lover of the "gentle craft," and would only fish with a hook, having a great dislike to the use of a net. Also that, when in pursuit of game, he would not shoot at birds, perching or at rest.

Though we are told that he avoided any unnecessary reference to the gods, it is clear that he was a man of strong religious feeling and deep convictions, both being quite compatible with an incapacity for formulating theological dogmas; and it is this incapacity, or, it may be, unwillingness, which obliges us to rest content with such abstract ideas on the subject as we are able to glean from his writings, or the writings of his disciples.

Thus we are told of him that, at one time, being ill, it was suggested to him, it would perhaps be as well that he should pray for his recovery. "Is there any authority for my doing so?" asked the sick man, as if to test his disciples' knowledge. "Undoubtedly," was the answer; "is it not written—'thou shalt offer up thy prayers to the gods of heaven and earth'?" "Truly, you are right," said Confucius; "and can you suppose that I have not long since done so?"

Though a believer in himself, and highly estimating the work to which he had devoted himself, he was without arrogance, and there is frequent testimony of his being deeply impressed with a sense of his own shortcomings. From a passage in the "Dialogues," we learn that his majestic carriage was combined with mild and pleasing manners; that he was grave without being austere; and that he was quite free from any approach to selfishness, prejudice, bigotry, or vanity.

In addition to this he is said to have been charitable and humane. If at any time a case was brought to his notice, of a family, through poverty, being unable to bury a deceased relative in a befitting manner, he at once arranged for the proper performance of the funeral rites at his own expense.

To sum up: he was above all things a man. A man with high aims and aspirations—none, perhaps, higher. And it is as a man, with all the personal characteristics which have been described stamped upon him, that he stands out, in the present day, through the dimness of distant ages, before the many millions who have been taught to venerate his memory, as the great example, the teacher for all time.

To those amongst us who have studied his life and teaching, he cannot fail to present himself as an

eminently religious-minded man. His beliefs may have been vague, for he was confessedly ignorant of dogmas ; but there is sufficient evidence to show that they included the immortality of the soul, the eternity of truth, and the over-ruling providence of a just God.

CHAPTER XII.

The Confucian literature—The first of the "Five Classics:" the "Yîh-King," or the "Transmutations."

"I LOVE and revere the ancients," was the declaration of Confucius to his disciples, "for their writings are so far-reaching and comprehensive that I am never weary of studying them. They afford, indeed, an inexhaustible mine of intellectual wealth, and so it is that, when I write, I do not seek to set forth or originate new ideas, but confine myself as much as possible to compiling and elaborating all that was taught by the holy sages of antiquity."

He considered that there was something approaching to a divine inspiration in these ancient records; that those who had written them were alone worthy of being called sages; and that he would have been guilty of a gross act of presumption, and have led people to suppose that he desired to place himself on the same level with them, had he written anything new or original.

According to most authorities, his mode of procedure seems to have been to collect and bring together everything, no matter how fugitive or fragmentary, that might present itself in a written form, likely to elucidate or explain the frequently obscure meaning of the scanty, but highly prized, literature which had been handed down as a sacred legacy from the past.

From this mixed and incongruous mass of materials he selected, after due examination and deliberation, everything which he deemed worthy of being retained, whilst he rigidly discarded all that might have, in the slightest degree, an immoral or licentious tendency. These selected portions he subsequently classified and re-arranged, and he finally either incorporated them in those works to which they seemed properly to belong, or, as happened in a single instance, gave them a distinct form.

The works so arranged form the series known under the title of the "Five Classics," and it is upon them, conjointly with the "Four Books," of which an account will be given later on, that the whole superstructure of education in China has been raised.

The "Five Classics" comprise the "Yĭh-King," "Shoo-King," "Shē-King," "Lē-King"—anciently divided into two parts—and the "Chun-tsieu," or, as these titles may be translated—leaving out the

qualifying suffix "king," which means classic—the "Transmutations," the "Records," the "Odes and Lyrics," the "Rites and Ceremonies," and "Spring and Autumn."

With the exception of the "Transmutations," these books do not now perfectly represent the state in which they were left by Confucius. The edict issued by Tchē-wang-tē, soon after his assuming absolute power in the middle of the third century B.C., for the destruction of the archives, and of all books which were in any way connected with the sage's teaching, was ruthlessly carried out; and it was more than fifty years later before any serious attempt was made to recover the few stray copies which had been preserved, and it was then found that some of the most important of these had become imperfect from the insufficient protection afforded them in the places in which they had been concealed.

That the "Transmutations" had escaped injury is due to the circumstance that, in the decree for the destruction of the books, an exception had been made in favour of those works which treated of medicine, husbandry, and divination, and that the Yîh-King was considered to come under the latter category.

If we now give it precedence of the other classical works, it is not on account of its being the most important, or the most interesting, but because of its

reputed great antiquity, the high estimation in which it is held by Chinese savants, and the great value set upon it by Confucius.

Its history is said to be this: Some three thousand three hundred years before our era, the Emperor Fŭh-hi, walking on the banks of a river, was startled by the sudden apparition of what by some is described as a tortoise, by others as a dragon having the form of a horse, with a number of circular marks on its back of so striking a character that he had them copied, and after much thought and consideration—having first substituted lines for the circles—arranged in the form of eight diagrams, each of which consisted of three parallel horizontal rows formed respectively of one long or two short lines.

To each of these diagrams he gave a name, whilst making it the symbol of some natural object, such as the heavens, the sun, the moon, the earth, water, fire, the wind, and a mountain; and to each of these was joined some influence or moral quality such as would seem to accord best with it. In addition to this, each diagram was made to represent one of the cardinal points of the compass. These diagrams were supposed to be full of subtle meaning, and the brains of many successive generations were actively employed in endeavouring to find it out. The result was that, in due course, a science of divination, of a mild and

somewhat incomplete kind, was founded upon them, which, in the course of the twelfth century B.C., received a further development, and it is from that date that our information respecting the "Yĭh-King" becomes historical.

Then it was that the dynasty of Shang was being brought to a close with the reign of the imperial monster Chow-wang. The ruler of one of the minor states having, on the occasion of some act of more than ordinary cruelty, ventured to remonstrate with him on his inhuman conduct, the tyrant threw him into prison, and only released him after a confinement of nearly two years.

Whilst in[1] prison, the captive prince, known in history as the illustrious Wan-wang, devoted himself to the study of Fŭh-hi's eight diagrams, and it was as changed by him and further elaborated by his son, who succeeded him as Prince of Chaou, on the accession of his elder brother Woo-wang, the founder of the dynasty of Chaou, to the imperial throne, that they became known under the title of the "Yĭh-King," which was the form under which they presented themselves to Confucius.

Wan-wang seems to have done this:—Preserving the names and composition of Fŭh-hi's eight diagrams—or as we will call them from their being formed of three parallel and horizontal rows of

divided or undivided lines, *trigrams*—he proceeded to give them a different sequence, and to make them the symbols of the various family affinities, in place of the natural phenomena of which Fŭh-hi had made them the representations. The change in their position had also the effect of altering the points of the compass for which they had previously stood. Then, discarding their previous attributes, he is said to have composed out of these eight trigrams a combination of sixty-four figures or hexagrams by placing the several trigrams either above or below each other, so as to form a complete set of symmetrical—in form, but not in composition—figures, to each of which he attached a name, and a short note indicating the characteristics of which it was a symbol, in connection with the occult science, to which, as has already been stated, these mysterious figures of Fŭh-hi had early given rise.

His son commenced where his father had left off. Taking each of the rows of divided or undivided lines of which the several hexagrams were composed, he sought to attach to each its due value as the emblem of good or evil, of success or failure, of profit or loss, encouragement or restraint. I must confess to having found all this remarkably difficult of comprehension, but have no doubt that it was well adapted to the purpose to which it was to be applied.

It was to the study and elucidation of this work, thus constituted, that Confucius devoted some of the last few years of his life. At one time he bestowed such continuous labour upon it that the cords which held the boards together upon which the "Yîh-King" was transcribed, had to be renewed three times within a very short period; and he is said to have become so fascinated with his task, and impressed with its importance, that he declared, if he had possessed the power of renewing his life, he would have devoted fifty of its years to the study of a work the true meaning of which was only just beginning to dawn upon his mind.

The whole of the chapters of commentary and illustration, attached to the "Yîh-King" as it now stands, are commonly attributed to Confucius, though the correctness of this view, with respect to several of them, has been called in question. They are chiefly composed of attempts to elaborate and expand the meaning of the original text, and, in many cases, to attach such symbolic meanings to the diagrams and their several component lines, as would best adapt them to the requirements of those in high authority who might wish to consult them; and there is a sprinkling of moral reflections, without which no utterances of Confucius would be complete.

Attempts have been made to deduce a scheme of

cosmogony out of this work, but these would seem to have no better foundation than the fact of its claim to being a complete system of symbolization in which everything lies hid, until it becomes revealed to the earnest seeker. However vast the scope and intention of the "Yĭh-King" may have appeared to subsequent students, it cannot be doubted that, in the first instance, it did not go beyond the limitations of "the ever-changing phenomena of nature and experience," and that the chief aim of those who matured it, and of Confucius no less than others, was to perfect a medium, in accordance with its original purport, through which a sure and reliable guidance could be obtained by those who sought for it, under all the varying conditions in which they might be placed.

That this was the way in which it was regarded in the time of Confucius, is made clear by the fact of the "Yĭh-King" having been saved from destruction some two centuries after his death, as a book treating of divination, as has been already noticed.

It would seem as if this book had a strange fascination for all who came in contact with it; and even now, when the cultivated classes have ceased to consult it for guidance in the conduct of their affairs, it is still regarded by the Chinese literati as the arcanum of all knowledge; and some of them even

assert that, to the initiated, there is no modern scientific invention which is not to be found in it.

Endless controversies have been the consequence. Endless attempts to define the indefinite, explain the incomprehensible, and produce order out of chaos. It would only weary the reader, and bring but small profit, to do more than refer to them, for it is scarcely possible to reduce them to terms which would enlighten his understanding. How, indeed, could the mystical union of the Yang and the Yin—the male and female principles of nature—be brought down to the level of an ordinary intellect? Or the endless combination and transmutation of all material and immaterial forms, be considered without an overwhelming sense of fatigue or weariness? I shall therefore confine myself to stating, as briefly as possible, the mode in which, during the divination days, this book was used.

In the commentary on this work, attributed to Confucius, it is stated that there were four important points connected with it by which the sages regulated their actions:—the study of its terms, so that, when speaking, their language might be brought into harmony with its teaching; of its changes, for the due guidance of their actions; of its symbols, for principles necessary in the construction of mechanical implements; and, lastly, of its prognostications, in

order that they might acquire a knowledge of results; and hence it is that a man of high character, who is about to take action in either a public or private matter, should begin by making inquiry through the transmutations as to his chances of success or failure, and straightway regulate his conduct according to the answer he may have received.

The mode of procedure connected with this inquiry is then minutely given; but it will be enough for our purpose to know that he who sought for guidance from these diagrams or symbols was brought *en rapport* with them through the agency of the stalks of a certain plant, which were cut into short lengths, and arranged in figures in conjunction with special numbers obtained, in the first instance, through the medium of the same mapped record of the mysterious spots from which the diagrams had been produced, and thus brought into agreement, though it is not very easy to make out how, with the corresponding symbol or with one of its component parts.

The "Yĭh-King," as may easily be supposed from the peculiar nature of the work, has had but few translators, but the translation of it, which forms the sixteenth volume of the "Sacred Books of the East," by Professor Legge, is, as indeed may be said of all his works, a monument of erudition and laborious research, and I would refer to its pages those amongst

my readers to whom the present slight sketch, principally drawn from it, may be deemed insufficient.

An attempt has been made, with but small success, to find an explanation of the symbols which form the basis of this work by establishing a comparison between them and the theory of numbers which occupies such a prominent place in the Pythagorean system of philosophy; and to reduce the original arrangement of lines, and the diagrams formed out of them, into mere mathematical and figurative modes of expression belonging to a scheme of dynamical and scientific speculation, respecting the original elements of nature, and the constant and unceasing changes which they are perpetually undergoing.

As it now stands, to the uninitiated, the "Transmutations" will remain as one of the curiosities of Oriental literature. If the Chinese continue to hold it in such high esteem, it is probably on the principle that man is often found to value that most which he understands least.

An immense amount of labour has been bestowed on this work by the Chinese literati, the number of books upon it, enumerated in the catalogue of the imperial library, amounting to nearly fifteen hundred.

CHAPTER XIII.

The second of the "Five Classics:" the "Shoo-King," or the "Records."

IT must be confessed that it is difficult to avoid a feeling of intense relief when closing the pages of the "Transmutations" and turning to those of the "Records," for here we stand once more on solid ground, and are brought face to face with one of the oldest—if not *the* oldest—historical works in existence.

Although I have given it the second place, whether regarded from the point of view of its antiquity, its authenticity, or the value of its subject-matter, the "Shoo-King" is unquestionably the most important of all the works belonging to the ancient Chinese literature.

Commencing with the reign of Yaou, B.C. 2356, and ending B.C. 721, it gives, in a broken sequence, a series of historical events, extending over a period of more than sixteen hundred years. Its historical accuracy is undoubted, but its chief interest lies in

the vast amount of information which its pages afford, respecting the moral, social, religious, and political condition of a people who, whilst struggling against natural obstacles of the most formidable kind, succeeded in building up an empire which still stands to bear testimony to the goodness of their work, and to the soundness of its foundations.

It is generally allowed by Chinese commentators that, in the composition of the work called the "Records," Confucius confined himself as closely as possible to the transcription and collation of the scattered materials afforded for such a task in the archives of the several states; for it had been a long-established custom at the imperial court, and at the courts of most of the minor princes, to have the various events belonging to each reign minutely chronicled by an officer who held the rank of court historiographer; and that, bringing these together, he made an old existing work, of the same name, the nucleus upon which he formed the new one.

It now presents itself to us as an incomplete work. The destruction of all books of historical import had been so thorough, that when, after the death of the Emperor Chē-wâng-té, and some forty years after the burning of the books, an attempt was made to restore the lost writings—much time having been lost in the interval through the state of anarchy into

which the empire had been plunged—only a single copy of this work, and that a very imperfect one, could be found. Subsequently, however, in the year B.C. 140, on pulling down an old house in which Confucius had once lived, another copy was found amongst a number of books, which were discovered hidden in a wall; but they were in a very bad condition, and written in an obsolete character, so that, with respect to the "Records," it was only possible to recover a portion which, when added to what had been previously regained, represented little more than half the number of sections into which the work was said to have been originally divided.

But the evil did not end here. Many of the chapters as they now stand bear evidence of being imperfect; the chronology has been disarranged; and there are passages, fortunately but few in number, in which the style of writing is so obscure as to be all but unintelligible to the best Chinese scholars.

But, with all its imperfections, it will ever stand out in all the majesty of hoary age as a grand old book. The light in which it is regarded by the Chinese will be best shown by the following extracts from a preface, written by the commentator Tsae-chin, to an edition published in the year A.D. 1210, which will serve also, at the same time, to give some idea of the general character of the work.

Tsae-chin proceeds to say—

"In the fifth year of Ning-tsung of the Sung dynasty, in compliance with the wish of my master Choo-wan-kung, expressed shortly before his death, I commenced a commentary on the 'Shoo-King.'

"I laboured at it assiduously for ten years, and now, having brought my work to a conclusion, my great fear is that, although I have expended so much time and thought upon it, and sought to elucidate its many difficulties in such a multitude of words, it will be found that I have failed, and proved myself to have been unequal to the task.

"This classic contains the acts and ordinances of the two great sovereigns Yaou and Shun, together with those of the founders of the three succeeding dynasties; and as these acts and ordinances have to be regarded as the rule and pattern for all future ages, their importance is such that they cannot be dealt with superficially. Neither is it possible that their deep and, often, hidden meaning can be brought to light without serious and long-continued study.

"The difficulty moreover is made all the greater through the length of time—extending to some thousands of years—which separates us from the occurrences we seek to elucidate. But there is one point which stands out so prominently that it is unmistakable. It is this: Every act of these five

highly gifted rulers, was based on sound principles, having, in each case, their origin in personal rectitude, of which, indeed, all that they did and ordained has to be considered but as the embodiment. We have only to realize this, and much that was previously obscure will be made plain to us.

"To explain this more fully: we find the leading characteristics, by which the government of the three great sovereigns, Yaou, Shun, and Yu, was distinguished, were moderation and singleness of purpose; whilst those most prominent in the founders of the Shang and Chaou dynasties were firmness and persistency. But whether we find them exhibiting these several qualities in their own persons, or impressing upon others the value of benevolence, or reverence, or truthfulness, or valour, it will be seen on investigation that, however much these terms may seem to differ, the principle which produced them remains the same, and that what these great men did, and that which they urged others to do, was nothing more than the exhibition of that which will ever be found to be the root of all the virtues—personal rectitude. Thus when they spoke of Heaven, it was with a view of seeking for and pointing out the source from which all right principles proceed. When they spoke of the people, it was in order to find out the method in which these Heaven-bestowed prin-

ciples could be best applied. The rites and ceremonies, music, and public instruction were but means to the same end, whilst the classical writings and intelligent teachers, formed the medium by which these principles could be disseminated ; the great aim of all being, the proper regulation of family life, a well-ordered government in the several states, and a prosperous, peaceful, and contented empire." With much more to the same purport.

In a literal translation of the "Shoo-King"—interspersed with the Chinese text—published at Shanghae by the Rev. W. H. Medhurst, the translator, when referring, in his preface, to the political economy and moral philosophy to be found in its pages, observes—

"The lessons of practical wisdom contained in the 'Shoo-King,' are applicable to all ages and nations. Even in enlightened Europe and at this advanced period of the world's civilization, something may be learned from it, and so long as the world retains the distinction between high and low, rich and poor, so long will the principles of reciprocal justice and affection, respect, and obedience, laid down in its pages, keep their ground." And, further on, he proceeds to say—

"The historical classic constitutes the best specimen of natural religion derived from an independent

source with which we are at present acquainted ; and yet it is miserably deficient in all that respects the spiritual and eternal interests of man."

The last portion of the criticism may be true, but it has to be remembered that the "Shoo-King" has no pretension to being anything but a collection of historical records.

In another place, the translator states that the great defect of this book is "its want of religion," but surely, before we accept the correctness of this reproach, we must greatly narrow the meaning of that word.

Schlegel, the great German philosopher, writing of it under the influence of Catholic conviction, declares that "a close parallelism is perceptible in many of the old Chinese traditions, such as belong to the opening chapters of the 'Shoo-King,' and the testimony of the Bible." But probably this may be said with equal truth of many other ancient traditions. Nevertheless, the evidence it affords of the monotheistic belief of the ancient Chinese is very striking.

The style of the "Shoo-King" varies with the period and the nature of the subject. There is something dramatic about the opening chapter. After eulogizing the character of the great Emperor Yaou, and relating the steps taken by him for the correction of the calendar, and the drainage of the waters, rendered necessary by the frequent floods,

it proceeds to describe the mode in which the venerable sovereign made choice of a successor.

Yaou is surrounded by his ministers and the nobles of his court. It is to the minister presiding over the whole empire, poetically termed the region of the Four Mountains, that he first addresses himself.

"'Hearken, ye president of the Four Mountains, and pay heed unto my words. I am old and stricken with infirmity. Threescore years and ten have passed since I ascended the jewel throne. The burdens of the state have become too heavy for me. It is to you I turn, O ye President of the Four Mountains, for aid. I will place the administration of affairs in your hands, for my innermost thoughts have been made clear to you, and I know of none other who could so well act in accordance with them."

"But the president of the Four Mountains, making answer, said: 'Behold, your servant is unworthy; he is weak and incapable, and would but dull the splendour of your Majesty's greatness. Let my lord choose another better fitted to carry out his behests.'

"Then said the emperor, the great king, the mighty Yaou:* 'Tell me, ye princes and nobles, and ye officers of my court, who is there that is able to do

* Legge employs the untranslated title, "Tî," which is commonly translated *emperor*. The terms which I have used are no exaggeration of its meaning.

this thing? Speak, if ye know. But if ye know not, let due search be made; but take heed that ye care not whether he who has most merit be of high or low estate.'

"Then the princes, the nobles, and the officers of state cried as with one voice: 'O king! there is but one man within the limits of the state who is capable of carrying out our lord's commands. He is a poor man, whose name is Shün. Shün is the man. There is none but Shün.'

"But the king, asking, said: 'Wherefore should this be so? The man's name has been made known to me; but tell me, I pray thee, O president of the Four Mountains, in what doth this man's great merit lie?'

"The president answered and said: 'Behold, great king, this man Shün—who is unmarried—had a blind, unprincipled father, and a weak and wicked mother, and a brother who was tyrannical and overbearing, yet such is the perfection of his character that by the mere force of example he has been able to reform them and cause them to live harmoniously together. He who can best regulate a family can best regulate a state—and so it is, O king, that we have chosen Shün, for we know of none other who could have acted as he has done.'

"The king said: 'It is well spoken, but it is right that I should prove him. I have two marriageable

daughters; since he is unwed, I will bestow them upon him.'

"Then the king sent his two daughters to Shün, exhorting them, and saying: 'See that ye are careful and discreet in all things.'

"Thus were the king's daughters married unto Shün." *

The test turned out satisfactorily, and it is first as the aged monarch's coadjutor, and then as his successor, that Shün is made the subject of the next chapter. He is described as a man of great energy and ability, who produced a number of measures of the greatest public utility; amongst others, improvements in the mode of taking astronomical observations; a ritual for the conduct of religious worship when "sacrificing to the supreme God, and presenting offerings to the presiding spirits of the land;" the establishment of a uniform system of weights and measures; the adjustment of the musical scale; the codification of the criminal laws, and the establishment of a system of fines in lieu of punishment for minor offences; the promulgation of rules of conduct for the guidance of those who had the administration of the affairs of state; the division of the empire into twelve states, and the settlement of their boundaries; for the reclamation of the land, and the drainage of

* See E in Appendix.

the waters ; all of which are to be found fully described in the pages which treat of his long reign.

Living to extreme old age, he was succeeded by Yu, who had been selected during Shün's lifetime, in consequence of the marvellous ability he had shown when, as surveyor-general, he had established the boundaries of the several portions of the state, regulated the course of the rivers, and made them carry off the waste of waters.

These works were carried out on a more comprehensive scale after his accession to the throne, and the first portion of the third chapter gives an account of their progress up to the time of their completion ; the distribution of lands, with titles attached to them, amongst the nobles ; and the regulation of the tenures by which they were held.

Then commences the portion of the "Shoo-King" in which the records may be regarded as contemporaneous with the events they describe. It begins with an address by the emperor to his troops on the eve of a battle with a rebellious vassal, in which, after enlightening the leaders of his army as to the cause which has rendered it necessary for him to take up arms and execute "the judgment of Heaven" upon the rebel chief, he continues as follows : "And now, ye spearmen and archers of my army, I would warn you, take good heed that you are obedient to my orders,

and are careful in the performance of your duties; and you, charioteers, see that your horses are well guided. Those who do well I will reward before the temple of my ancestors; but he who merits my displeasure I will put to death—ay, and his children with him."

It has to be remarked that at this time chariots formed the most important portion of the Chinese armies, and that no mention is made of cavalry until many years later. Each chariot carried three men clad in mail, the charioteer being in the centre, with the spearman on his right and the archer on his left.

Many similar speeches are placed on record. Thus, at the commencement of the chapter which is devoted to incidents belonging to the Chaou dynasty, we have one from its founder, Woo-wang, son of the Wan-wang of the "Transmutations," as leader of the confederated nobles in rebellion against the tyrannical Emperor Chow. This is how it is given.

"In the springtide of the thirteenth year there was a great gathering of the confederated nobles at Mang-tsin, which was presided over by Woo-wang, who addressed them thus—

"'Oh, ye confederated princes and nobles, my allies, and ye, my brave captains tried in arms, listen to my words.

"'All created beings are the offspring of heaven and earth, and of all living creatures man is the most highly endowed. The man who is endowed with the greatest intelligence becomes a king, and a king should be the father of his people.

"'But with Chow-wang of Shang this is not so. He treats the decrees of Heaven with contempt, and cruelly oppresses the people committed to his charge. Given up to drunkenness and vice, his brutal nature has revealed itself in hideous crimes. He has extended the punishment of criminals to their relatives; he has made employment in the public service hereditary, and done great injury to the people by his extravagance, and by his lavish outlay in palaces, pavilions, and not-needed public works. He has burnt, and even roasted alive, innocent and virtuous men, victims to his ferocity; he has flayed and ripped open pregnant women. Is it to be wondered at that such a man as this should have drawn down the anger of Heaven upon him?

"'My revered father was the divinely appointed instrument for bringing him to punishment, but he, alas! died before the sentence could be carried out. Hence it is that I, unworthy as I am, stand now before you as your chosen leader, to accomplish, with your aid, that which was left undone. But, meantime, the tyrant Chow, heedless of the forces which have

been arrayed against him, continues his career of violence and crime. Sitting at his ease, what cares he for the decrees of Heaven? He serves neither gods nor genii, he even neglects to sacrifice on the altars of his ancestors, whilst the sacrificial animals are given over to be consumed by the vilest ruffians; and yet, when doing all this, he has the impudence to claim the people for his own, and to declare that he rules over them in virtue of a Divine decree!

"'When the strength of contending parties is equal they should be measured by their virtue; when their virtue is equal, by the justice of their claims. Now, the tyrant Chow may have the advantage of us in strength, for his followers may be counted by tens of thousands, but there are as many minds in his armies as there are men; whilst with us, although we number but three thousand, we stand together as one man.

"'The cup of the tyrant's iniquity is full to overflowing; it is God who has commanded that he should be destroyed; and if I fail to obey the Divine commands, my guilt will become equal to his own.

"'Think not that I have entered lightly upon this matter. My days and nights are filled with anxious care. But this great task has been imposed upon me by my illustrious predecessor, and with the blessing of the Almighty Disposer of events and the gods of this

land, and with your powerful aid, I will carry it through.

"'When Heaven has compassion upon a people, it grants them that which they desire. Help me, then, to purge the empire from the evils under which it groans. Behold, this is the time for action; let us be careful that it is not lost.'"

Towards the end of the month, the army having meantime advanced to the north of the Yellow River, Woo-wang, having inspected his soldiers, makes a second speech in somewhat similar terms, followed the next morning by a third. Then there is a pause in the records; what has taken place in the intermediate time we are not told, but on the fourth day of the second month—

"The king, having at an early hour reached the boundary of the state which formed the imperial patrimony, halted his army, and, holding a battle-axe glittering with gold in his left hand, and waving a white banner with his right, again addressed it, commencing with a few words of encouragement to the soldiers: 'Well done, ye soldiers of the west; we have indeed made a long march!'* Then, turning to the princes and others who stood near him, he continued—

"'Hearken, my allies, confederates, and friends,

* The song of the tired soldiers, given in the next chapter, probably refers to this march.

and give heed, ye my ministers, councillors, vassals, and captains; and you, men of Yung, Shŭh, Kiang, Mow, Wei, Loo, Pang, and Po, poise your javelins, make ready your shields, and raise high your spears, for to you too would I say a few words.

"'The ancients had a proverb, "Hens do not crow at dawn; when they do, it betokens ill to those who are awakened by them." Now to Chow of Shang this only too well applies, for he listens but to the advice of women.'"

And then the speech is continued in much the same strain as the former ones. It ends, however, with directions for his soldiers in the approaching battle:—

"It is to you, oh ye my soldiers, that I would now speak. Bear in mind in the battle this day, that when ye advance ye move not forward more than six or seven paces at a time—but at the sixth, or, at the most, seventh pace, that ye halt and reform your ranks: so when engaged in close combat do not allow yourselves to be carried away by your ardour, so that you lose your formation; but at the fifth, or, at the most, sixth blow, take care to cease striking, and see that your order is retained.

"'But, not the less, let the attack be fierce, let each man strive to surpass his fellow in courage; be as lions, as tigers, as ravening wolves, so that none can

withstand you. Yet, when within the enemy's borders, be merciful to those who offer no resistance, and are ready to join us. But above all be bold and energetic, and do not allow yourselves to forget that he who holds back will be sure to receive a befitting punishment.'"

In the next chapter Woo-wang, after another long setting forth of the crimes of the tyrannical Chow, gives the result of the great final battle. Commencing with the operations leading to it, he says—

"On the twenty-eighth day of the first month my troops crossed the river at Mang-tsin,* and on the third day of the second month I drew up my army on the borders of Shang to await the enemy's attack. The next day Chow, at the head of a vast army, advanced at early dawn and drew up in battle array in the desert plains of Mŭh. My army moved forward to the attack, but before it had come near enough to engage the enemy, the leading divisions of his force had faced round, and, attacking those in the rear, driven them off the ground with such great slaughter, that it would have been possible for a beam of wood to have floated in the pools of blood with which the field of battle was covered. Thus was the dynasty of Shang overturned, and the government re-established upon its old conditions."

* *i.e.* the ford of Mang.

A great number of the sections into which this work is divided are composed of speeches taking the form of admonitions. Amongst these we find one against drunkenness, showing that the great social evil, which we are often inclined to look upon as of modern growth, was causing much solicitude to those who were seeking to elevate the morals of the nation nearly three thousand years ago in China. Then we have a warning against indulging in luxurious ease, and many exhortations with regard to the performance of public duties, and to the just administration of the laws. And in connection with the latter subject there is published, about the middle of the tenth century B.C., a revised code of laws, in which the system of allowing the punishment for minor offences to be commuted by the payment of a fine was extended to crimes punishable by death—an act which has been severely criticized by moralists of a later age, notwithstanding that it had received the sanction of Confucius, through his having allowed it to be recorded in this work.

It is, in fact, to this code, upon which all subsequent ones have been formed, that is to be attributed the widespread official corruption, and the low tone of public morals, with which the Chinese have been so often justly reproached, and that, notwithstanding the high-flown sentiments and exhortations which accompanied its promulgation.

I have devoted more space than I had intended to this book, and yet feel that I have been unable to do it justice, or give a very clear idea of its contents. To those, however, who are desirous of a more exact acquaintance with it, I would advise the perusal of the translation of it by Dr. Legge, which forms the third volume of the "Sacred Books of the East," edited by Max Müller.

CHAPTER XIV.

The third of the "Five Classics:" the "Shē-King," or the "Odes."

IT is a point open to question whether this book, as it now stands, represents what we should call in modern parlance, a new and revised edition by Confucius of a previously existing work, or a selection by him, put together in a new form, out of a far larger number of lyrical compositions scattered over the empire. Legge, in his translation of the religious portion of the "Odes," included in the third volume of the "Sacred Books of the East," inclines, after much investigation, to the former opinion, and narrows the action of Confucius to a reformation of the music, by which each separate ode was accompanied.

But whether this be so or not, there can be no doubt with respect to the high place occupied by the "Odes" in the sage's estimation. He declared no man's education could be considered complete who had not studied them, and that, as models of purity of thought, they were unequalled; indeed, in the "Dialogues"

he is made to say that the pervading sentiment of the "Odes," and the lessons to be learnt from them, could be compressed into a single sentence, "purify your thoughts." He recommended the study of the "Odes" to his disciples as a means for attaining to mental expansion and refinement, and a knowledge of the true value belonging to harmony as opposed to enmity and strife. In addition to which, it would furnish them with examples of the manner in which filial piety can be best shown to a parent, and faithful service best rendered to a prince.

Taking a somewhat lower ground, he specially directed his son to study them with diligence, not only on account of the above-mentioned advantages, but in order that he might acquire from them materials for conversation; for Confucius had too much practical wisdom to despise the social distinction which belongs to a man who is a good talker.

Amongst all peoples, poetry has ever been one of the earliest modes by which traditions have been preserved and popularized. There can be no doubt but that the memory of words is greatly aided by their rhythmical expression, and that this will be the case in a far higher degree when these words in the form of lyrics are associated with some familiar melody.

The first mention of poetry in the Chinese classics

is when the Emperor Shun, in the "Records," speaking to his minister on the subject of regulating the musical scale, observes: "Poetry is the expression of earnest thought, and singing is the prolonged utterance of that expression." And in a preface to the "Shē-King," ascribed to Confucius, it is said—"Poetry is the product of earnest thought. Feelings are embodied in words. When words are insufficient, we have recourse to signs and exclamations; when they fail, we burst into song; should not song suffice, unconsciously the hands and feet are set in motion, and we dance."

"Poetry," observes Sir John Davis, in his work on the poetry of the Chinese, "in most countries begins with being the vehicle of religion and morality, and the first record of historical facts. Venerated at first as the language of wisdom or inspiration, it is at length cultivated as a pleasurable art, and never fails to improve in harmony, however it may degenerate in other points, with the progress of time." And this has been the case with the poetry of the Chinese. A modern Chinese writer observes, with regard to this, that "the growth of poetry is like the growth of a tree; in the 'Shē-King' we come in contact with its roots; these proceed to develop branches and leaves, and buds and flowers, and finally the ripe and luscious fruit."

It was probably the metrical character of the "Shē-King" which made its recovery and restoration less difficult than that of the "Shoo-King," and it does not appear to have suffered any great diminution in its contents as a consequence of its suppression.

Of the three hundred and five odes and lyrics of which it is composed, there are only five forming part of the sacrificial series, which belong to a date antecedent to the twelfth century B.C., the remainder covering a period between that date and some six centuries later. The whole collection is divided into four parts. The first of these consists of some one hundred and sixty songs, illustrative of manners and customs, and may be fairly termed "songs of the people." The second part is formed of seventy-four odes, which, with the thirty-one forming the next section, may, from their having been sung at the various ceremonials and festivities connected with the coming together of the feudal princes, or with receptions at the imperial court, be designated "festive songs" and "laudatory odes." The last section is composed of forty pieces, which have been characteristically described as "odes for the temple and the altar," and are the only ones which have a distinctive religious character.

Although it is usual to speak of the "Shē-King" as a collection of odes, it is, in fact, composed of a variety

of pieces, having all the distinguishing qualities of ballads, songs, and hymns, whilst, again, of these some are metaphorical, others narrative or descriptive, whilst in a few, these three modes of treatment are to be found in combination.

The style of these pieces varies greatly, according to the period in which they were written and the nature of the themes, but always bears the impress of boldness and simplicity. The versification, as might be expected from the nature of the language, is peculiar. As a rule, though there are many pieces in which the construction is irregular, each strophe consists of a number of lines, which generally rhyme, composed of four characters, though sometimes lines are introduced which consist of six or eight. This is a metre which does not belong to modern Chinese poetry, in which the number of characters in a line is either five or seven. In both cases the position of the cæsura is fixed and regulated by the number of characters in a line, and the poet has no choice with respect to its use, as is the case with us.

In the "Shē-King," in addition to the difficulties presented to a translator, by the nature of the language and the style of versification, is the one which proceeds from the almost invariable practice of introducing into every piece one or two lines

which are repeated in every strophe, referring to some natural object or phenomenon that can only be brought *en rapport* with the verses into which it has been interpolated by the wildest flight of fancy. Yet these lines cannot be omitted, and must be treated in such a way as to give a just idea of the original as a poem, for it has been well observed: "Celui qui prétendrait juger de quelque poème que ce fût dans une traduction littérale, pourrait aussi raisonnablement espérer de trouver, sur le revers d'une tapisserie, les figures qu'elle représente dans toute leur délicatesse et toute leur splendeur."

But, with all these difficulties in the way, the "Shē-King" has had no lack of translators. A Latin version appeared in the last century by Père Lacharme, a portion of which, rendered into French, completes the one contributed by M. Pauthier to the collection of translations from various Eastern languages, published under the title of the "Bibliothèque Orientale," in 1872. The incomplete but well-thought-out translation of Dr. Legge has a value for students and scholars which cannot be overestimated, whilst the several metrical versions in German, and especially the translation by Victor von Strauss, which is both musical and, as far as possible, true to the original, commend themselves to those acquainted with that language, by the poetry of the past, having been

reduced to a form best calculated to render it attractive to the reader of the present day.

The subjects of the odes are so various, it would be impossible to give even an abridgment of them; though, perhaps, they might be classified under the heads of amatory, domestic, political, bucolic, festive, warlike, admonitory, ethical, ritualistic, and religious. They vary in length and style as much as in matter, and it would be almost impossible, by a few examples, to give a just idea of the variety of thought, incident, and treatment, which is to be found in the many pages of text and commentary, of which this singular and interesting book is composed. But a few extracts, in the choice of which I have been chiefly guided by the facility they seemed to afford for representation in an acceptable shape, may serve to illustrate, however incompletely, some of their characteristics.

I shall begin with the ode which, though not the most ancient in date, is the one which stands at the head of the collection. It is said to have been written as an Epithalamium, on the occasion of the marriage of the great popular favourite Wan-wang, in the twelfth century B.C.

The original consists of three strophes—the first of four, and the two succeeding ones of eight lines each, each line consisting of but four characters;

but in the following attempt to present it in an English dress, it has been found impossible to adhere to their construction.

THE MARRIAGE OF WAN-WANG.*

"From out an islet in the stream,
Whose waters in the sunlight gleam,
Comes the low cooing of a dove,
So soft, and sweet, and full of love.
And near by lives, so pure and fair—
No maid can match her beauty rare—
She who ere long will be the bride
Of him who is his country's pride.

"Far, far, from her, he deeply sighs,
'Oh, wert thou here!' he vainly cries,
'I cannot sleep, I only dream
Of her who lives beside the stream,
Where water-lilies interlace
And open to the sun's embrace.
But where the lily can compare
With my sweet love, so pure and fair?
The stream flows on, the lilies fade,
But brighter blooms my glorious maid.'

"And she, the while, doth pass each day
As if the world were far away.
Music its charm, her leisure lends,
Her harp, and lute, her closest friends.
And yet she sighs when on the stream;
She sees the golden sunlight gleam,
And sees the lilies interlace
And open to the sun's embrace.
But soon there comes the happy day
When she a bride is borne away

* See F in Appendix.

With bray of trump and clash of gong,
Through flowery mead and gazing throng,
To place herself, with all her charms,
Within a loving husband's arms."

In a Chinese novel, written in the fourteenth century A.D., which has been translated into French under the title of "Les deux Cousines," this ode is mentioned as one of the two sung on the occasion of the double marriage of the fortunate hero of the tale with the two deeply attached cousins, who had refused to accept him on any other terms.

In another of the lighter lyrics, taken at random from "The Songs of the People," a maiden, in a somewhat doubtful strain, admonishes her lover to be careful:—

"Chung-tsze, Chung-tsze,
I do implore
You pass not through
Our village more,
Nor trample down
Beneath your feet
The shrubs betwixt
The house and street;
Please do not come
Again this way,
My father's will
I must obey—
I dare not love thee!

"Chung-tsze, Chung-tsze,
Climb not the wall,
It is so high,
And you may fall

And crush the tree
  Which stands below,
Planted by me
  Long, long ago;
Oh, what would then
  My brother say?
You know his will
  I must obey—
    I dare not love thee!

"Chung-tsze, Chung-tsze,
  On no pretence
Dare you break through
  The garden fence
When I am there;
  You must be wise,
For people have
  Such prying eyes;
Oh, do not come,
  I beg and pray,
Or you will make
  The gossips say—
    I dare to love thee!"

The following ode is of a different character; it is supposed to have been sung by tired soldiers, belonging to Woo-wang's army, on the march, after a long campaign in the wet season:—

"Long have we marched
  O'er mountains steep,
  Through forests dark,
  And rivers deep.
    And wearily
    We onward go,
    To seek and fight
    The Eastern foe.

"When will it end,
This long rough way?
These rocks and streams
Which block our way,
As wearily
We onward go,
On, ever on—
Where hide the foe?

"Together run
The white-hoofed swine,
The moon and stars
Of rain give sign,
But rain or fine,
There is no rest
For weary soldiers
From the West."

A song, in which the leader of the men of Tsin encourages his soldiers, who had complained of their want of clothing, has decidedly a more martial "ring":—

"To arms! to arms, soldiers!
To arms, one and all!
Who is there would heed not
The Emperor's call?

"The Emperor calls us
To march 'gainst the foe,
And he gains most honour
Who strikes the first blow.

"You say you want clothing,
My clothes you shall share;
Quick! see that your lances
Are chosen with care.

"What matter to soldiers
If linen they lack?
But my robe is his
Who dreads a bare back.

"Then march on! I lead you,
The Emperor calls,
And glory for ever
Is his who first falls."

Another pictures the rejoicings of the people on the return of their feudal lord, after his investiture with a robe of honour:—

"'What see ye on the mount, Chang-nan?'
—'The white-robed plum, the dark green pine;
And our great lord, see, see! he comes
Clad in a robe which fox-skins line.
How gracious, yet how proud, his mien,
Never a nobler lord was seen.'

"'What see ye on the mount, Chang-nan?'
—'High peaks and paths, and meadows fair;
And our great lord, in princely guise,
With 'broidered robe and stately air,
He comes, he comes! long may he reign,
Rejoice! our lord is home again.'"

One more—a lament in a time of scarcity:—

"Alas, alas!
The flowers fade
And all is drear,
I know not why
The leaflets die
And I am here.

"Oh, had my mother only known
My life would be a living moan,
She would have brought
That life to naught.

For better far
That man should die
Than live a life
Of misery.

"Look at the sheep!—
They are so thin,
They are but head
And bone, and skin.
The star which rises
Out the sea
Shines through the net
Where fish should be.
With nothing left
To eat or drink
Into the grave
We starving sink."

But it would be impossible to give anything like an accurate idea of this remarkable book by a few examples taken, hap-hazard, from its pages. In order to be thoroughly understood the "Shē-King" has to be studied. What I have done may suffice for the general reader, whilst the student will find all the information he may seek for in the works of the authorities which have been already quoted.

Yet I feel I ought not to close this notice without giving some evidence of the deep religious feeling which pervades this ancient classic, by adding a few lines taken from various odes, in Legge's version, which bear upon this point.

Speaking of Wan-wang, it is said—

"He watchfully and reverently and with entire intelligence served God. . . . He conformed to the example of his ancestors, and their spirits had no occasion for complaint. . . . His example acted on his wife, extended to his brethren, and was felt by all the clans and states."

Again, with reference to the establishment of the Chaou dynasty :—

"Great is God. Beholding this lower world in majesty . . . He sought for one on whom to confer the rule.

"God surveyed the hills. . . . God who had raised the state raised up a proper ruler for it.

"God said to Wan-wang, 'Be not of those who reject this, and cling to that; be not like those who are ruled by their likings and desires;' and so it was that he grandly ascended before others to the height of virtue.

"God said to Wan-wang, 'I am pleased with your intelligent virtue'"—and this virtue a little further on is said to have been—"in accordance with the pattern of God."

In an ode, which ends with a description of a great sacrificial rite, it is said—

"As soon as the fragrance ascends, God, well-pleased, smells the sweet savour."

When describing the miserable condition to which

the people had been reduced by a series of calamities, these terms are used:—

"God has reversed His usual course of procedure, and the lower people are full of distress. . . . Heaven is now sending down calamities. . . . Heaven is now displaying its anger;" and, further on, after speaking of the enlightening power of Heaven, it is said, "Good men are a fence; the multitude of people are a wall; great states are screens; great families are buttresses; and the cherishing of virtue secures repose;" and, in the last strophe, "Revere the anger of Heaven. . . . Revere the changing moods of Heaven. . . . Great Heaven is intelligent, and is with you in all your goings. Great Heaven is clear-seeing, and is with you in your wanderings and indulgences."

And, in a warning addressed to the tyrant Chow, by Wan-wang, the latter says, "It is not Heaven that has flushed your face with spirits . . . it is not God that has caused this evil time."

Passages, too, are frequently to be found like these:—

"Thou didst confer on us the wheat and the barley, which God appointed for the nourishment of all.

"How beautiful the wheat and the barley! The bright and glorious God will in them give us a new year.

"A sovereign with the gifts both of peace and war, giving rest even to great Heaven.

"How is it, O great Heaven, that the king will not hearken to the justest words? He is like a man going astray, who knows not where he will proceed to. All ye officers, let each one attend to his duties. How do ye not stand in awe of one another? Ye do not stand in awe of Heaven."

These extracts might be greatly multiplied, but those which have been given will, I think, be found sufficient. It will be seen that one of the most striking features of the "Shē-King," and one which distinguishes it from the ancient poetry of all other nations, with the exception of that of the Hebrews, is its entire freedom from all mythology, taking that word in the sense in which it is generally used.

CHAPTER XV.

The remainder of the "Five Classics:" the "Lē-King," or the "Book of Rites and Ceremonies;" and "Spring and Autumn."

OF all the classical works the "Lē-King," or book of ritual and ceremonial observances, is by far the most voluminous, Legge's translation, with copious annotations, occupying the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth volumes of the "Sacred Books of the East" series.

It is a kind of digest of the laws and canons of the ancient sovereigns, with respect to the administration of justice, the distribution and tenure of land, and the collection of revenue; regulations for the proper performance of the sacrificial rites; and a code of observances, often extremely minute, connected with mourning, marriage, various minor ceremonies, the conduct of children to their parents, and a variety of circumstances belonging to everyday life; and it includes a chapter on music.

The "Lē-King" held a very high place in the esti-

mation of Confucius. He considered that, however much the mind might be elevated by the study of the "Transmutations," instructed by the "Records," stimulated by the "Odes," or purified and refined by the cultivation of music, it would have remained incomplete, and society in a state of confusion, but for the regulating power belonging to the knowledge—and due exercise—of the rites and ceremonial observances.

Much that is contained in it, is drawn from examples belonging to a time, but little removed from what may be called the "Genesis" of Chinese history; and it is in the long and sedulously cultivated reverence for antiquity, which received so great an impetus from Confucius's teaching, that we find a key to the fact, that this book is still regarded as the great authority in all matters which are capable of being referred to it, and that so many irksome customs and cruel laws have been retained down to the present day.

The intention of the work was evidently to lay down a series of rules, which should so regulate human action, that all conduct, whether in public or private life, should be brought into harmony with Divine laws, and the precepts formulated by men of superior virtue and intelligence, whose knowledge was the outcome of experience and observation.

In other words, a mode of action, which should

give expression to all that might belong to the innate sense of propriety, and to the eternal fitness of things; reduced to practice in our daily lives, and made, as far as possible, the chief regulator in all social intercourse, between the various classes and grades of which society is composed.

Such was the theory. But in order to give it a practical application it had to be reduced to a uniform system. Hence the necessity for fixed rules; not only for the correct performance of great duties, but for regulating the minutiæ of matters of etiquette, extending down to eating and drinking, salutations and leave-takings, questions and answers, dress and deportment, and a host of trivialities which to our eyes appear too small for notice.

The book, as it now stands, is divided into forty-six sections. The directions contained in it are clearly put, but the arrangement of the subject-matter is very imperfect. Yet it is full of interest, and throws a flood of light upon the early condition of the Chinese, which is hardly to be obtained from any other source. Many of the chapters are said to have had a later origin than the time of Confucius; but the stamp of his ethics is to be found everywhere impressed upon it, and the value of the information which this work contains for the general reader does not depend upon the authorship of certain passages.

Speaking of this book, Legge, in his introduction to his translation, says, "I agree with P. Callery"—also a translator—"that this book 'is the most exact and complete monography which the Chinese nation has been able to give of itself to the human race.'" And, further on, he proceeds to say, "More may be learned about the religion of the ancient Chinese from this classic than from all the others together," explaining, at the same time, that the reader "must not expect to find anything approaching to a theology, a dogmatic teaching of religion being totally absent from the Confucian system."

With regard to ceremonies, the same authority observes: "The book opens with the sentence, 'Always and in everything let there be reverence;' and in hundreds of other passages the same thing is insisted upon—that ceremony without an inspiring reverence is nothing."

The volume of this work is so great, and the range of subjects of which it treats so diverse, that it would be as vain to attempt to give an idea of its contents by a few extracts, as it would be to show by a single thread drawn from a tangled skein of silk, made up of every variety of colours and sizes, the exact nature of its composition; but in the two chapters entitled "Confucius at home at ease," and "Confucius at home at leisure," there is so much that is illustrative

of the sage's mode of teaching, that I am tempted to give a few extracts from the first of them.

Confucius, in company with three of his disciples, has just returned from taking part in some great court ceremonial; and one can hardly help suspecting that the disciples must have given their master reason for thinking, that they had been wearied rather than impressed, by the formalities connected with their functions; for, after inviting them to sit down on the mats arranged for guests near his own, he says—

"Now, with your permission, I will explain these ceremonies, so that you may not only understand them, but be able to put them into practice.'"

One of the disciples at once rises from his mat before speaking on the introduction of a new topic, in accordance with the rules of etiquette, and begs that Confucius will have the kindness to afford them his instruction, upon which he proceeds—

"Respect without a due observance of the rules of propriety—in other words, ceremony—would soon degenerate into obsequiousness; courtesy into cajolery; and courage into bluster."

Then, after Confucius has made a few more observations to a similar effect, a second disciple rises from his mat and asks: "Will you have the goodness to inform us whether it be true that it is by

the regulating power of these ordinances that evil is kept within due bounds, and goodness made perfect?"

"Most assuredly it is so," is the answer.

"But in what way is this effected?" again asks the disciple.

"In this way," replies his master: "through the influence produced by them. For instance, in the border sacrifices to Heaven and earth, the dominating idea is, that they should set forth, and so extend, a feeling of reverential love towards the world of spirits; that in the summer and autumn sacrifices in the ancestral temple, it is to give expression to the love and affection, which should exist between every member of a family; whilst in the custom of placing food by the side of a corpse, the intention is, to give some indication of the love and estimation, in which the departed was held by all who mourn his loss; in the ceremonies connected with archery meetings, and the fêtes which accompany them, the object is to encourage, and give some evidence of, the friendly feeling which ought to prevail amongst neighbours; and in those which belong to festive gatherings and banquets, of the cordial relations existing between a host and his guests, and of the high esteem in which they hold one another."

Proceeding to enlarge upon this, he adds—

"With an intelligent understanding of all that

belongs to the border sacrifices to Heaven and earth, and of the summer and autumn services in the ancestral hall, the government of a country could be carried on as easily as this"—pointing with the forefinger of his right hand to the palm of his left. "Let men but adhere strictly to these rules, and all difficulties vanish. The proper distinction between youth and age will be recognized and acted upon; harmony will be established in the inner apartments, and within the family circle; order and correct official precedence will be established within the precincts of the court; hunting expeditions and military operations will be skilfully conducted; and the army will be so highly disciplined as to make success in war certain."

And in a somewhat similar strain he continues to the end of the chapter, with the recorded result that the three disciples were thoroughly enlightened, and it was with them "as if a film had been removed from their eyes."

It is with reluctance that I turn away from this book, for there is so much to be learnt in its pages of the political, moral, and social world in which Confucius lived, that we seem to know him better when we have read it; but my space is limited, so that I proceed to the last of the five classics, the work of Confucius's old age—"Spring and Autumn."

This work comprises the annals of the sage's native state of Loo, extending over a period of two hundred and forty years, between the dates of 740 and 480 B.C. The title is said by some to have been given to it from its having been commenced in spring and finished in autumn; others, however, somewhat more poetically say it was so named from the spring-like, life-giving nature of its praise, and the autumnal-like, withering effects of its censure.

CHAPTER XVI.

The first of the "Four Books:" the "Ta Heŏ," or the "Great Doctrine."

IN the "Four Books," the voices from the hoary past, no longer instruct us out of the experience bequeathed by generations who lived before history was, and whose lives are as hidden and unknown to us, as are the grains of sand, washed down by the mountain torrent, which lie at the lowest depth of the widespread ocean.

It is Confucius himself who now speaks to us, either directly or through the medium of disciples or commentators, though the classics still afford illustrations which are not unsparingly used.

The first of these works—for the title of which I have selected the translation that seems to best harmonize with its contents—is also found as a chapter in the book of "Rites," to which it was added some centuries after the death of Confucius.

The copy in my possession commences with an

introduction by the commentator, Tsze-ching-tsze, who says—

"The 'Great Doctrine' is to be regarded as the literary legacy of Confucius. It is only by its study that the gates of virtue can be entered, for the student will learn from it, the mode in which the ancients regulated their studies; and if he master its contents, and then proceeds to make himself acquainted with the writings of Mencius, he need not fear but that he will find himself well advanced on the right road."

Then follow the words of Confucius, as recorded by his disciple Tang-tsze, with the latter's commentary upon them. Confucius says—

"The great doctrine is that which teaches us the necessity of exhibiting transcendent virtue"—that is to say, as it is explained, the virtue with which man is endowed by Heaven at his birth, before it is contaminated by contact with the world—"in our own persons; of extending its influence to others; and of our not resting satisfied with our achievement, until the very summit of excellence has been reached. But to effect this, we must first gain a knowledge of the exact point which it is our duty to reach, and then resolve to attain it. Resolution will lead to strength of character; strength of character to calmness and tranquillity; calmness and tranquillity to the power of reasoning soundly—let man be but

capable of a judicious exercise of his reasoning powers, and success is certain to attend his efforts.

"Now all things, whether material or immaterial, have roots and branches, first causes and consequent effects; and to enable us to arrive at a correct knowledge of true principles, we have but to find out the natural order in which these effects proceed.

"The ancient sovereigns who first endeavoured to extend the principles of this transcendent virtue throughout the empire, commenced at the very root; they began with themselves, and having, by a deep investigation into natural causes and effects, rectified their ideas, and purified their motives, they were enabled to act virtuously themselves; and by extending their principles of action, first to their families, and then to the smaller states, finally succeeded in establishing them throughout the length and breadth of the empire.

"Thus we have an example of the order in which our studies ought to be arranged—first, deep investigation into the nature of all things, giving us knowledge; knowledge, giving rise to fixed principles; fixed principles, to virtuous action; virtuous action, to well-regulated family rule; well-regulated family rule, to good government; and good government, to a peaceful and contented empire.

"It matters not what our position in life may be—

from the emperor, down to the meanest of his subjects—it is alike the duty of all, to regard self-cultivation as the root. But if the root be disordered, how can we possibly expect the branches to flourish, or that he who neglects that which is of primary importance, will give due weight to secondary matters which may proceed from it?"

Such is the portion of the book which directly records the words spoken or written by Confucius; the remainder of it, is taken up with Tang-tsze's commentary upon them, divided into ten sections.

Sect. i. simply refers to several instances in which transcendent virtue had been pre-eminently displayed by several of the early sovereigns.

Sect. ii. is on the subject of "the reformation of the people," illustrated by quotations from the classics, to prove that the principle had been recognized and acted upon in remote ages. Thus—

On the bathing tub of Tang was engraved, "Renovate (or purify) thyself, and renew thy renovation (or purification) daily."

In the book of "Records," we find the words, "Renovate the people."

In the "Odes"—

"Heaven with fresh life
The ancient state
Of Chaou has re-endued,
And caused just rule

To renovate
The strength by time subdued."

Sect. iii. illustrates the precept of "taking no rest until the highest point of excellence—that is, of perfect virtue—has been reached, by again quoting from the "Odes"—

"Within the limits
Of his state,
The people love
To congregate."

And—

"In mountain grove
Alone is heard
The twitter of
The yellow bird."

"From which we learn," says Confucius, "that if a bird, is taught by its instincts to select the place best adapted to its wants, it is only natural that man, should be drawn towards the locality in which he would be most likely to find peace and happiness."

Again, in praise of the great model, Prince Wan-wang—

"What radiance
Doth virtue cast,
Upon the ages
Long since past!
Behold great Wan!
Though wide his sway,
Yet as a prince
He could obey;
In filial piety
Next to none,

A father kind,
A loving son,
Striving to give
To all their due,
In every word
And action—True."

Another ode, of similar import:—

"Waving and green
The bamboo grows,
Where smilingly
The swift Kē flows,
But virtue
Greater beauty throws,
Accomplished prince,
O'er thee.

"We cut and carve
The shapeless bone,
Turn its dark hue
To white.
Polish and grind
The rough dull stone,
And lo! the gem
Shines bright.

"So, mighty prince,
Thou didst control
The gifts which Heaven supply,
And hence it is,
Though ages roll
Thy fame shall never die."

The object, in both cases, being to show that Wan-wang had immortalized himself through having been actuated by motives, based on the application of virtuous principles, carried out to their utmost limit;

and, as if to emphasize this idea, and impress it more deeply upon the student's mind, the following is added :—

"The ancient sovereigns'
Virtuous sway
Lives in men's minds
Unto this day,
And though all else
May pass away,
No age shall it forget.

"Princes, their rule
Of life regard,
Their virtues emulate,
Whilst seeking for
The same reward,
And to become as great.
Whilst high and low
Throughout the land
Their actions imitate."

"Whilst the world is, they shall enjoy
The fame that time cannot destroy."

Sect. iv. treats of causes and consequences : which it does by quoting a declaration of Confucius, that in settling disputes he "only differed from others in that, he permitted no altercation, and would not allow unprincipled persons to unsettle the minds of others by stating their opinions."

Sect. v. explains the meaning of "obtaining knowledge by a deep investigation into the nature of all things." It is written by Ching-tsze, the original, by

Tang-tsze, having been lost. He says, "There is a mutual relation existing between the mind of man and the laws of nature; and it is only by closely scrutinizing the one that we can hope to enlarge the other; and that this is why the 'Great Doctrine' commences by sending the student to investigate natural laws, so that by a course of prolonged and indefatigable study, he may arrive at a thorough comprehension of them, and thus cause his mind to be proportionately enlarged."

Sect. vi. treats of moral rectitude, or purity. It is said—

"To be pure in mind, you must be free from self-deception—you must hate vice, as you would a disagreeable odour, and love virtue, as you would some beautiful object. There can be no self-respect without it, and this is why the superior man must be guarded in his hours of solitude.

"The worthless man secretly employs his idle moments in vicious acts, and there is no limit to his wickedness. In the presence of the pure, he plays the hypocrite, and puts forward none but his good qualities; yet how does this dissembling avail him when his true character is revealed to the first scrutinizing glance?

"It has been said, that there is strict watch kept over that which is pointed at by many hands, and

gazed at by many eyes; it is in solitude, then, that the upright man has the greatest reason to be most guarded.

"As riches adorn a house, so does an expanded mind adorn and tranquillize the body. Hence it is that the superior man will seek to establish his motives on correct principles."

Sect. vii. shows that "personal character can only be established on fixed principles, for if the mind be allowed to be agitated by violent emotions, to be excited by fear, or unduly moved by the love of pleasure, it will be impossible for it to be made perfect. A man must reason calmly, for without reason he would look and not see, listen and not hear, eat and be ignorant of the flavour."

Sect. viii. explains how it is that the exhibition and cultivation of personal virtue form the basis of family order:—

"It is because men are prone to be partial towards those they love, unjust towards those they hate, servile towards those above them, arrogant to those below them, and either harsh or over-indulgent to those in poverty and distress, that it is so difficult to find any one capable of exercising a sound judgment with respect to the qualities of others. Hence the proverb: 'A father knows not his son's faults, nor the farmer the growth of his own grain.'"

Sect. ix. illustrates the meaning of "the regulation of a family, forming the basis for the administration of a state.

"He who is incapable of regulating his own family, cannot be capable of ruling a nation. The superior man will find within the limits of his own family, a sufficient sphere, for the exercise of all those principles upon which good government depends. How, indeed, can it be otherwise, when filial piety, is that which should regulate the conduct of a people towards their prince; fraternal affection, that which should regulate the relations which should exist between equals, and the conduct of inferiors towards those above them; and paternal kindness, that which should regulate the bearing of those in authority, towards those over whom they are placed?

"It is said in the 'Records,' 'Nourish good principles with the same care that a mother would bestow on her new-born babe.' You may not be able to bring them to maturity, but you will nevertheless be not far from doing so. We must not expect results before we have obtained the means of producing them.

"It is said in the 'Records,' 'An affair may be ruined by a single word, and an empire may be established by one man.' In like manner a nation may be renovated by the example of a single family,

or driven into rebellion by the individual action of a bad prince.

"The Emperors Yaou and Shun ruled justly, and the people were contented. Keĕ and Chow were tyrannical, and the empire was filled with disorder and violence. The prince who wishes to rule well, must first find out and correct his own faults, for if he be devoid of self-knowledge, and possesses those vicious inclinations which he would destroy in others, it is quite impossible that he should succeed in doing so. What can be more beautiful, than the picture of a prince so presiding over his own family, as to present an example worthy of imitation to the whole empire?

"The poet says with respect to this—

"'The peach-tree stands
In beauty bright,
Decked with green leaves
And blossoms white:
But fairer still,
And yet more fair,
The mantling blush
And modest air,
That marks the mien
Of timid bride
Who does well o'er
Her home preside.'

"Yes, truly; let but a man regulate his own family properly, and then, and not before, he will be able to instruct a nation.

"In the "Odes" there is another passage which bears upon this subject:—

"'No prince's rule
Can be correct,
If he fraternal
Ties neglect.
Let him but keep
Them in his sight,
And others too
Will act aright.'

"Again—

"'He was consistent in good,
And all around him did righ

"Showing that a prince has but to set an example as a father, son, and brother to his people, and they will imitate him."

Sect. x. illustrates the meaning of "the good government of a state, producing peace and contentment throughout the empire.

"If the prince treats the aged with reverence, he will inculcate filial piety; when he acts with due respect to those in superior positions, he will teach his people to be reverential; when kind and compassionate to the destitute and weak, he will set an example which will lead to a spirit of general content. And this is the principle upon which he ought to regulate his conduct.

"Do not let a man practise to those beneath him, that which he dislikes in those above him; to those

before him, what he dislikes in those behind him; to those on the right hand, that which he dislikes on the left;" in other words, let him do, as he would be done by; "and in this, again, he will have a principle for the proper regulation of his actions.

"The prince, indeed, should sympathize with the feelings of his subjects, and look upon them as members of his own family, for, as the ode says—

> " 'Happy the state whose prince is mild,
> And treats each subject as a child,'

for a good prince is as a parent to his people.

"But, how differently does the poet represent the feelings of a nation towards a harsh and despotic minister, when he makes them say—

> " 'We live beneath a mountain's frown,
> In the dark shadow it casts down,'

for so it was that the house of Yin was regarded by the people. But it was not always so, for an ode says—

> " 'Whilst they retained the people's love
> Yin's princes pleased the powers above,'

and this pictures the whole matter as if in a mirror. Yes! The decrees of Heaven are unalterable. To gain a throne, it is necessary to win the hearts of the people; but he who cannot retain this affection, will soon lose it. Hence the great aim of a good prince, is to be virtuous; virtue, will give him subjects; sub-

jects, territory ; territory, wealth ; and wealth, will give him the power of being useful. Thus virtue, in this case, too, may be regarded as the root, of which revenue will be the branches. But he who neglects the root, and turns his attention only to the branches, will be sure to produce a state of anarchy and discontent.

"Where wealth is allowed to accumulate and remain idle, the population will diminish, but where it is allowed to circulate freely, the population will increase. It has to be remembered that liberality attracts, and covetousness repels, and just as ill-considered words provoke objectionable replies, so does wealth improperly acquired bring down ruin upon its possessors.

"It is said in the 'Records,' 'The decrees of Heaven are not immutable, and he who has gained a throne by virtue may lose it through vice.'

"It is recorded in the annals of the state of Tsoo, that when its minister was on one occasion questioned by an ambassador as to the value of some precious gems, he replied, 'We in Tsoo do not care for these things ; we regard able and virtuous men as our chief treasures.'

"In like manner, when the Prince of Tsin, then in mourning for his father, who had disinherited him and expelled him from the state, received offers of

assistance to enable him to regain his lost patrimony, he exclaimed, 'It is not that, which now troubles me; it is the fear that I may not properly perform my duties as a son.'

"And so again we find it written in the announcement of Tsin—'If I had a thoroughly honest and faithful minister, whose sole talent consisted in being able to appreciate and make use of the abilities of others; who would not merely praise the virtuous and wise with his lips, but love them in his heart; I should be contented to leave my children and my people in his hands, for I know they would be safe in his keeping. Not so, however, with a minister, who, being jealous of the good qualities of others, seeks to keep back those who give evidence of superior intelligence and virtue; such a man would fail to give protection to either my children or my people, and may, in all truth, be regarded as a danger to the state; for, just as the wise action of one man may bring it to a state of prosperity and contentment, so may the misconduct of another reduce it to a condition of misery and ruin.'

"The good prince, will not employ such a man as this last, but will send him into banishment, for his true place is amongst the barbarians, and he should be sent to live amongst them.

"The prince who sees a man of high virtue and

does not promote him, or in promoting him does not raise him to a sufficiently high office, is guilty of negligence; but, in the case of a vicious man, should he not dismiss him from his service and send him to a distance, he commits a serious fault. To love those who are universally hated and despised, and to hate those who are universally beloved, is to do outrage to the best feelings belonging to man's nature. The punishment of Heaven will surely overtake the prince who acts thus.

"The position of a prince is indeed one of great responsibility; to fit himself for it he must establish, and hold on firmly to right principles; there must be no wavering, and he must avoid arrogance and extravagance, or these principles will soon be lost.

"The great principle with regard to revenue is, that the producers should be many, and the consumers few; that those who produce it, should have every encouragement and facility for doing so, and that those who dispense it, should be honest and economical. When these conditions are observed, there will be enough for all requirements.

"The character of the virtuous prince is ennobled by wealth, that of the vicious one is debased by it.

"When a prince is benevolent and just, the character of the people will be brought into harmony with his own, the public duties connected with the

state will be rigidly performed, and the revenue raised to a point which will amply suffice for all the needs of the state.

"It was said of old: 'Just as it is beneath the dignity of those who possess horses and chariots to concern themselves about poultry and swine, and of those who are able to use ice in their sacrifices, to busy themselves with feeding oxen and sheep, so is it unworthy of the owner of a hundred chariots, to avail himself of the services of a rapacious minister—it would be better indeed were he to employ a robber.'

"When a prince gives himself up entirely to the acquisition of riches, it is probably through his having fallen under the influence of a minister unworthy of his confidence; he will not the less call down upon himself the vengeance of Heaven, and excite the anger of his people. He may seek to avoid these calamities by calling a virtuous minister to his aid, but it will be too late; the evil will have been done, and the consequences cannot be averted.

"From this it will be seen that it is a just and equitable government, and not wealth, which makes a country prosperous."

The "Great Doctrine" concludes with a short summary of these ten sections, and an exhortation to the reader to study the book with diligence.

I have been tempted to place this work before the

reader *in extenso* because it gives such a perfect example, in a small compass, not only of Confucian doctrine, but of the mode in which it is presented to the Chinese student. Objection may be taken to its style, to its frequent repetitions, and to the importance which is given to ideas which it is almost impossible to raise above the level of commonplace, but an adverse criticism cannot easily be carried beyond these points, and I am inclined to think that the ethical and political views set forth in its pages, will, whether for simplicity, purity, or truth, bear a favourable comparison, with many more pompous utterances put forward in far more recent times.

The underlying strata of metaphysical thought belonging to it, I shall proceed to notice in a future chapter.

CHAPTER XVII.

The second of the "Four Books:" the "Chung-Yung."

I NO sooner take up this book, than I find myself in contact with a great difficulty. The translation originally given to the two characters that form its title, and which, with slight modifications, has been adopted by succeeding translators down to the present time, is so misleading that I find myself compelled to discard it.

The Jesuit Father Intorcetta, endeavouring to be as literal as possible, and probably also to bring his subject into harmony with the ethics of the schools, termed it the "Medium constans vel sempiternum;" the French translators, following in the same groove, "Juste milieu" and "l'invariable milieu;" whilst in English we have "the constant medium," "the golden mean," and "the doctrine of the mean." The last is the rendering given by Legge; but, though he employs it, he does so under protest, for he says,*

* Legge's "Chinese Classics," vol. i. p. 45.

"And here I may inquire whether we do right in calling this treatise by any of the names which foreigners have hitherto used for it." And again, "This work is not at all what a reader must expect to find in what he supposes to be a treatise on 'the Golden Medium,' 'the Invariable Mean,' or 'the Doctrine of the Mean.' Those names are only descriptive of a portion of it."

Under these circumstances I feel justified in setting them aside, and in considering that von Plaenckner has approached nearer to a title likely to convey a correct meaning of the contents of the work, and of the idea Confucius was anxious to impress on his disciples, in "Der Unwandelbare Seelengrund." How, indeed, is it possible to imagine that Confucius, whose great aim was to impress upon his followers, the necessity of regaining and exhibiting that perfection of character, which each man had received as a Divine afflatus at his birth, and that there was to be no cessation in his efforts—no other point to be set before him although it might be unattainable—until it was reached, could, at the same time, have been the advocate of a doctrine so different, as one that would replace this goal by anything approaching to a "mean"? Besides, how, as it has been asked, is it possible for any system of moral teaching to be based on such a doctrine, when the slightest departure from

truth, turns it into falsehood; from good, into evil; from right, into wrong?

It is probable that the notion that Confucius was nothing more than a moral teacher, has either caused many of the metaphysical and religious ideas, which later research has brought to light in his writings, to be overlooked; or else that such a verbal rendering of the text had been chosen by its translators, as would best adapt it to certain preconceived principles of his ethical philosophy, as well as make it fit in with the popular beliefs, held with respect to him.

But I hardly think it is necessary to seek for any other cause, than that which belongs to the unfortunate selection of a title for this book which, being made the keynote of the whole work, reduced it to terms that weaken, to the point of misrepresentation, the great ideas which permeate through it, with respect to spiritual and religious life.

Were it not so, I would ask how is it possible that we should find Confucius using the word "Taou," to which, as we have seen, Laou-tsze attached such a wide-reaching significance, of which Confucius was cognizant, in the mere matter-of-fact sense of the way, or the path, so that we meet with such sentences as "the path of the mean," the "course of the mean," and "perfect virtue according to the mean"? Surely it does not require much study of the context, read

by the light of what we find taught in the "Great Doctrine"—to see that this word "Taou," when thus used by Confucius, can mean no mere path in which we proceed to virtue, but the course or way of that Divine spiritual nature which proceeds from God,—the way of that Divine perfection which man has to seek to regain,—a way from which there can be no deviation, for it is only by the road which has been made for us by God, that we can move upwards, and hope to reach Him. And the object of all that is said in this work is evidently to set forth and enforce this "great central undeviating and eternal truth," that he who would seek to gain the highest point of spiritual development, must first seek to find out and re-establish, those divine principles, the germ of which had been implanted in him at his birth.

The difference of meaning attached to the word "Taou" in this work by Confucius, from that given to it by Laou-tsze, seems to me to have been that, whilst the latter applied it in a way which is nearly coincident with our idea of the Divine attributes, united in an almighty "One," the former employed it, in a more limited sense, confining its application to the course by which all good flows from God, and inferentially, as the way—the only way—in which man can move onwards towards Him. To find this way, to move in it, and to keep in it, was to be the

goal of man's endeavours. When he had reached it —and not before—he would be able to act in accordance with the Divine will, or, as we conventionally express it, to "walk with God."

It has been brought forward as a matter of reproach against the educated Chinese of the present day, that they are in the habit of saying, in a spirit of well-bred complaisance proceeding from indifference, "Our three religions"—the Confucian, the Taouist, and the Buddhist—"are in reality but one." But when reduced to their simplest terms, I think it would be found extremely difficult for an impartial inquirer to arrive at any other conclusion.

Of course it would not be possible for me to enter into an exhaustive criticism of this work, or to do more than touch lightly on its contents. Suffice it to say that it is pervaded by sentiments of the highest moral purity, which, in correlation with the views I have already stated, give it an exceptionally religious tone, such as is only to be found in a comparatively few instances, in the other three books.

I shall confine myself to a single extract. Confucius is speaking of the supernatural; he says—

"How all-pervading is the influence of the spirit world! You look, and you can see nothing; you listen, and you can hear nothing; yet all nature is pervaded by it, it is within all things, and around all

things, and cannot be cast out. When a man is moved to purify himself, and fast, and put on ceremonial robes, and offer sacrifice, it is almost as if the gods revealed themselves to him—he appears to be surrounded by them, they seem as if they were at the same time on his right hand and on his left. Hence the ode says—

"The gods come down
In their omnipotence.
Take care, O man!
That thou hast reverence;
For though hid from thee,
They are everywhere;
Thou may'st not see them;
Not the less, beware!"

Fasting, is specially spoken of as being one of the means, by which the mind is prepared for the consideration of sacred subjects.

But I should give a false idea of this work, were I to allow it to be supposed that it was entirely taken up, with views connected with what may be called philosophical theology; on the contrary, it is full of practical teaching, conveyed in the shape of moral maxims and political precepts, and amongst these is one, which runs like a golden thread through the varied and somewhat tangled web, into which the utterances of the great teacher have been woven by his disciples, "Be virtuous and pure of heart."

Yes; there was to be no half-heartedness—no

seeking for a mean, no departure from the right—the Heavenward-leading—way. Self-cultivation was to be the rule for all. He who could best govern himself, would be the best fitted to govern others. Where could there be a closer paraphrase of the words of the great Chinese, as set forth in these books, than is to be found in the language of one who, being a poet, is not the less a moral teacher?—

> "Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules
> Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king;
> Which every wise and virtuous man attains.
> And who attains not ill aspires to rule
> Cities of men, or head strong multitudes,
> Subject himself to anarchy within,
> Or lawless passions in him which he serves."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The third of the "Four Books:" the "Lun-yu," or the "Dialogues."

FOR some time after the death of Confucius, his disciples were content with communicating to others, orally, the many maxims and precepts which had issued from the lips of their great master, and which they had treasured up in their memories as a sacred inheritance, to be guarded with the most jealous care. But before many generations had passed away it was found desirable to reduce them to writing, in the form in which they now present themselves to us—of discourses and dialogues.

Making allowance for the different circumstances under which this work was written, there is much similarity between it and the Platonic dialogues, though the reasoning is not so close, or the subjects under discussion so well thought out, and there is a greater admixture of personal anecdote.

I fear it must be confessed that the style is somewhat monotonous; and there are frequent repetitions,

due probably to much of it having been jotted down from the personal recollection of his followers, as occasion might serve, so that the same idea is frequently to be met with, expressed in almost identical terms.

The value of the work is none the less very great, for the information contained in it extends over a very wide area. It is much more voluminous than the two preceding books, and is the one which probably would be found most interesting by the general reader.

Confucius dealt largely in aphorisms, and from the "Dialogues" alone, a large number can be collected. Short pithy sentences, which have a terseness and point in the original, that it is next to impossible to reproduce in any other language. The following selections from them are given without any attempt being made to classify them, or arrange them in any particular order:—

On study—

> "Study, without reflection, is waste of time;
> Reflection, without study, is dangerous."

On truth—

"The untruthful man is like a chariot without a yoke."

On fame—

"Do not repine at obscurity, but seek to deserve fame."

On speaking and acting—

"Be slow in speech, but prompt in action."

On fixed principles—

"He whose principles are thoroughly established, will not be easily led from the right path."

On caution—

"The cautious are generally to be found on the right side."

On self-control—

"An army may depose its generals, but the churl cannot overcome his inclinations."

On wisdom and virtue—

"Knowledge is like a running stream,
But virtue is stable as a rock;
The learned man moves ever onward,
The virtuous live in peace and rest.
The wise man's heart is filled with joy,
The just man's name endures for ever."

On perfect qualities—

"The wise have no doubts,
The virtuous no sorrows,
The brave no fears."

On self-sacrifice—

"He who is truly good and great, seeks not to preserve his life at the expense of virtue."

On exhortation—

"By keeping silence when we ought to speak, men may be lost.

"By speaking when we ought to keep silence, we waste our words.

"The wise man is careful to do neither."

On reproof—

"If you would escape vexation, reprove yourself liberally and others sparingly."

On self-cultivation—

"The cultivator of the soil may have his fill of good things, but the cultivator of the mind will enjoy a continual feast."

On friendship—

"Make friends with the upright, intelligent, and wise; avoid the licentious, talkative, and vain."

On being known—

"It is more important that you should have a knowledge of others, than that they should have a knowledge of you."

On discussion—

"Disputation often breeds hatred."

On instruction—

"When a man has been helped round one corner of a square, and cannot manage by himself to get round the other three, he is unworthy of further assistance.

"In other words, there is no use attempting to help those who cannot help themselves."

On happiness—

"A man may be thoroughly happy, though he has nought but his arm for a pillow, rice to eat, and water to drink; but wealth and honours unjustly gained bring no happiness to their possessor, but are as fleeting clouds."

Another on study—

"Study as if you could never reach the point you seek to attain, and hold on to all you have learnt as if you feared to lose it."

On rules of conduct—

> "In thy youth, beware of lust;
> In thy maturity, of strife;
> In thy old age, of greed."

Of precept and example—

"The superior man practises before he preaches."

And lastly, and above all, for it occurs again and again, the golden rule—

"Do not unto others that which thou wouldest not they should do unto thee."

Such are a few of the most prominent of the moral maxims, which are so profusely scattered over this work. In a similar manner, we often find political subjects brought within the limits of a precept; for example—

"The decrees of Heaven are not immutable, for though a throne may be gained by virtue, it may be lost by vice.

"A good sovereign is like the pole star, which forms the centre round which all the other stars revolve."

The above extracts will suffice to give some idea of much of the subject-matter to be found in the "Dialogues," and I would refer those whose interest has been awakened to the point of making them desirous of becoming more intimately acquainted with it, to the facilities afforded them for doing so by comparatively recent translations, amongst which Legge's undoubtedly has the foremost place. The last portion, however, of the "Dialogues" is so illustrative of the style of the work, and the mode of Confucius's teaching, that it cannot well be omitted.

Confucius is being questioned—as he seems to have been again and again—as to the manner in which a good government could be best established. He answers—

"There are five good principles of action to be adopted, and four bad principles of action to be avoided."

"What are these five good principles of action?" some one asks.

Confucius replies, "To benefit others without being lavish; to encourage labour without being harsh; to add to your resources without being covetous; to be dignified without being supercilious; and to inspire awe without being austere."

"But," observes the first questioner, "I do not quite understand what is meant by 'to benefit others without being lavish.'"

"It is simply," explains Confucius, "to encourage the people to undertake such profitable labour as will best benefit them, without its being necessary to give them any assistance out of the public revenue;" and he goes on to say, "When the work they are required to do has been judiciously chosen, it will be cheerfully performed, and the people will be contented and not made to feel that they have been harshly treated. That which will add to your resources without producing covetousness, is the practice of virtue, for of virtue no man can have too much. To be dignified without being supercilious, is nothing more than to act in such a way, that whether when dealing with a few people or with many, with great matters or with small, you show by your demeanour that you are giving your whole attention to what you are doing, and that you regard nothing as being beneath your notice, or as unworthy of serious and careful consideration. And to inspire awe without being austere, you have only to watch over every minute detail connected with your daily life, not only of conduct and bearing, but even in minor matters, such as dress, so as to produce an effect upon the public mind, which will be equal in degree to that

which, without these influences, could only have been produced by fear."

"I think I understand," says the inquirer; "but, allow me to ask, what are the four bad principles of action of which you have spoken?"

These Confucius explains to be—*First*, cruelty; that is to say, the undue punishment of crimes committed through the ignorance proceeding from a neglected education. *Secondly*, tyranny; of that kind which renders people liable to punishment for offences not publicly notified as criminal. *Thirdly*, rapacity; which includes requiring a thing to be done without giving sufficient time for its execution. And *lastly*, meanness; leading in many cases to parsimony, and a want of liberality in the distribution of rewards.

"These are the four chief things to be avoided." But he adds, "Yet more than this; he who is ignorant of Divine laws, is incapable of carrying out the principles necessary for the establishment of a good government. A man who cannot distinguish between right and wrong, has no firm standing-ground; and he who would gain a knowledge of men, must first learn to understand the meaning of words."

And this, which is the concluding sentence of the "Dialogues," is explained by Mencius in the "Discourses," which form the subject of the next chapter, as follows:—

"To understand aright the meaning of words is this: to be able to perceive the dangers which lurk under specious phrases; the evil tendency of loose conversation; the injury produced by obscene expressions; and the falsehood and want of sympathy which lies at the bottom of all evasions. The man who is guilty of any of these, has no claim to be considered as a man of high character, no matter whether in public or private life. Hence, a great man must not only be careful in his actions, but in his choice of words. It is in this sense that Confucius has to be regarded as a great speaker, though he himself declared that he had been denied the gift of eloquence."

CHAPTER XIX.

The last of the "Four Books:" the "Discourses" of Mencius.

THOUGH this book forms a part of the Confucian literature, it dates from a later period; for Mencius, who ranks next to Confucius as a great teacher, did not flourish until nearly a century and a half after that sage's death.

It is only as supplementary to that of one upon whom he always looked as his master, that his teaching has to be regarded. He declared that he had nothing new to teach, but that his sole object was to explain, amplify, and enforce, doctrines which were in themselves all-sufficient for the political regeneration of the empire, and the establishment of society upon a firm basis.

A native of one of the small states in the same modern province of Shan-tung, which had been the birthplace of Confucius, Mencius belonged to a family which had numbered many men of rank and position within it. Like Confucius, he too had lost his

father when he was quite an infant ; and it was to the judicious and careful training of his mother, that he owed those great qualities by which his career became so distinguished.

Posterity has done full justice to his mother's memory. She is held up as a pattern of prudence and ability, and parents are directed to observe what she did, and to learn from her, the way in which a child can be best brought up.

Amongst the many anecdotes related of her, it is said that in the early childhood of Mencius—and I would here observe that Mencius is the Latinized form of Mang-tsze, just as Confucius is that of Kung-foo-tsze—his mother's house was close to a burial-ground. This naturally became the favourite resort of all the children of the neighbourhood, who amused themselves by mimicking the funeral rites, and with building tombs. When Hang-shè—for such was his mother's name—observed this, she said, "This is no fit place for a child to be brought up in," and moving her abode, established herself in a house not far from a market. Here again, she soon perceived that the child had joined his new companions, in pretending to keep shop, and to bargain and haggle, in imitation of what they had seen going on in the market-place. "Alas! this will never do," said his mother, and she again shifted her dwelling, settling down this time near a

school. The child's play-time was now spent in games of a higher stamp; he imitated the ceremonial rites and polite observances which formed a part of the instruction of his seniors, and his mother was satisfied.

On one occasion the child, having seen a man kill a pig, asked his mother what he had done it for. "In order that you might have some pork for dinner," was the reply; but, immediately remembering that she had not intended giving him any, she went and bought some, fearing that if the child had none, he might think he had been deceived; for, as she said to herself, "If, as was said of old, the education of a child commences before its birth, how much more careful ought I to be now that my child's intelligence has reached a point, that to deceive him would be to teach him to lie?"

On another occasion later on, Mencius returning from school sooner than usual, his mother asked him what he had been learning; and on his answering, "Oh, I learn what I like," she took up a knife and cut in two the woof that she was weaving. "There," she said, "what you are doing is like that—work that leads to nothing. If you wish to be a great and good man, you must study steadily and continuously. It is only by gaining knowledge, that you can hope to attain a state of mind, that will give you peace and

happiness when at home, and preserve you from danger when abroad. Besides, if you waste your time now, the end will be, that you will be obliged to take service in some menial capacity, whilst you will have nothing to shield you from misery and misfortune." From that moment, Mencius determined that he would be no longer idle, and pursued his studies with such diligence that he soon became a great scholar.

In order to be able to appreciate the value which the Chinese set on these, and similar anecdotes, we have to remember how strongly they are impressed with a belief, in the great effect, which is produced on a child's character and future career, by the nature of the locality in which it lives, and the circumstances by which it is surrounded; and this belief is based on what they conceive to be, the indelible nature of youthful impressions, and the permanence of the influences proceeding from them—influences which may be hidden or put aside, but are incapable of being destroyed, and which may, like unbidden guests, present themselves when they are least expected, and perchance the least welcome. Many, many centuries have passed away, but human nature remains the same; the difficulties which surround all that belongs to the training of youth still continue; and even now it is a question whether not a few

amongst our modern mothers, might not learn a useful lesson from the example of the Chinese widow —Hang-shè.

On reaching manhood Mencius enrolled himself amongst the disciples of one of Confucius's descendants, under whom he studied the great sage's doctrines with marked success. Later on he sought to apply them, in much the same manner as had been attempted by his great master, by taking service under several of the feudal princes, and endeavouring to induce them to act in conformity with the correct principles of good government. It appears, however, that his success was small, so that, in the end, he retired into private life, and sought to console himself, for his want of success as a state reformer, by devoting himself to literature, and by endeavouring to bring round him such a number of disciples, as would give him a fair prospect of his views being disseminated.

Although Mencius was a man of undoubted talent —by some indeed regarded, on the score of ability, as superior to Confucius—he was content to stand before the world as his imitator, and to base all the principles he inculcated upon his teaching. But notwithstanding this, he was not devoid of pride, which we find frequently asserting itself, despite his efforts to conceal it.

He was evidently a pure-minded patriot, of spotless character and independent principles, which he preserved untarnished amid the corruption of courts. Though his efforts as a reformer had confessedly failed, he had not laboured in vain, and his sayings, which were treasured up and handed down to posterity by his disciples, were to occupy a place in the estimation of generation after generation of thoughtful minds, only secondary to that bestowed upon those of his great predecessor.

He died in his ninety-fourth year, and was buried by the side of his mother; sacrifices being still offered up twice a year before his tomb.

The Mencian "Discourses" are written in much the same style, with regard to method, as the Confucian "Dialogues." The work is also divided into two separate parts, and subdivided into chapters. But if there is much in the latter to remind the reader of the Platonic dialogues, he will find that the former more nearly approaches to the familiar style of Boswell, and it is evident that a marked change in composition had taken place, in the interval of time by which the two works were separated.

The book opens with an interview between Mencius and one of the feudal princes—King Hwuy of Leang.

The king says, "Truly, my respected friend, since you have come this long distance to visit me, surely

you must have brought some scheme with you, which will enable me to add to the material prosperity of my country."

Mencius replies, "O prince, there is something better and higher to be sought after, than material prosperity. Would it not be preferable for your Majesty to seek after justice and benevolence, and rest satisfied when you have done so?" Then making this, as it were, his text, he enlarges upon it, till he closes the subject by returning to the same point, saying, "Do not then, your Majesty, allow yourself to speak of mere personal or political profit. Justice and benevolence are all in all, let them suffice."

At another time, on visiting the same king, he found him in his park amusing himself by looking at the deer, and by watching the geese swimming in a pond near where he stood. "Is it right that a highly cultivated man should take a pleasure in these things?" he asks of Mencius. "Most certainly," is the reply, "provided that he is virtuous." Mencius then proceeds to give as an example, the case of Wan-wang, who made the people participators in the pleasure he derived from such objects, and gained their affection through having done so.

The king turns the conversation to another subject. "I wish to ask you a question," he says. "When

there was a famine in Ho-wai, I removed the young and able-bodied to Ho-tung, whilst I sent supplies of grain to the old and feeble; and I acted in a similar manner when a famine broke out in Ho-tung. I have not found, on examination, that any of my neighbours have acted on the same principles, when similarly circumstanced, or that they have exerted themselves to the extent that I have done, yet how is it that the population of their states does not diminish, whilst mine does not increase?"

Mencius replies, "Your Majesty is a soldier and fond of war, allow me then to employ a military illustration. If at the sound of the gong, the soldiers advance against the enemy, but, on coming to close quarters, throw away their arms and run, some, it may be, fifty paces, and others, it may be, one hundred paces, do you think it would be reasonable for those who ran but fifty paces, to jeer at those who ran twice that distance?" "Undoubtedly not," said the king, "for they all ran away." "That being so," said Mencius, "I think your Majesty will be able to understand why it is you can hardly expect that your state, should have a greater population than the states ruled over by your neighbours."

He then endeavours to impress upon the king, the principles upon which such a system of government could be established, as would best produce the result

he so much desires. He does not seem to have accepted the king's own estimate, of the able manner in which his subjects had been assisted when perishing from famine, and indeed more than suggests that the famine itself was entirely due to misgovernment, for he ends his address by asking with some warmth, as if moved by some incident which had come under his own observation, "How is it that people are dying by the roadside and your Majesty does not know how to prevent it? It is all very well to say, 'It is not my fault, it is the fault of the seasons;' but I would ask what difference is there between such an excuse as this, and that made by a man who, having given another a mortal wound with a dagger, declares that it was not he who killed him, but the dagger? No, no! Do not allow yourself to blame the seasons; if your Majesty will but govern properly, there will be no famines, and all the people in the empire will gather round you."

The king observes, with more meekness than might have been expected, that his great desire is to hear calmly all that Mencius has to teach him, so the philosopher continues in the same strain—

"I should like to ask your Majesty what difference there may be—as far as the end is concerned—between killing a man with a stick, or with a sword?"

The king answers, "I know of none."

"Then I would ask," continues Mencius, "what difference is there between putting people to death by the sword, and in causing them to die through bad government?" The king having replied as before, Mencius goes on to say, "True, that there is plenty of fat meat in your kitchens, and well-fed steeds in your stalls, but the stamp of starvation is set upon your people, and their dead bodies cumber the ground until beasts of prey devour them. How can he who causes these evils have any claim to be considered the parent of his people? It was said by Confucius that the inventor of the wooden image, made to simulate a man, which was buried with the dead, died childless; what then shall be the fate of him who produces real suffering and causes his subjects to die of want?"

A straightforward, fearless teacher this, who is quick to brush away the cobwebs of plausible and specious pretexts which are drawn across his path. But it must be confessed, it is difficult to know which most to admire, the courage of the philosopher, or the forbearance of the prince.

Being asked, on another occasion, to give an opinion on the comparative merits of Confucius, and some of the great worthies of antiquity; Mencius, after commenting on the qualities and actions of those amongst them, who had made themselves

most conspicuous by their talents and virtues, sums up as follows :—

"It is true that the highest mountain, belongs to the same category as the mere mound; and that the largest river, is but the reproduction on a grand scale of the gurgling brook; and that the sage, is after all but a man. Yet we must not forget, that he is a man who towers above his fellows, in all the majesty of attainments utterly beyond their power of acquirement. So it is with Confucius. I have devoted much time to the study of the past, and I have arrived at the conclusion that, when we take into consideration his great thoroughness, and the effects which have been produced by his teaching, he has no equal."

The following is a good example of his manner of illustration. He is speaking of men's motives :—

"Men, may be equally good and actuated by the same motives, though at first sight it might seem as if the ends they had in view were quite different. For instance, what two men would appear to be so widely apart in their aims, as the armourer and the arrow-maker, the one seeking how best to preserve life, and the other how best to destroy it? but in reality they are both influenced by the same motive—to succeed in their respective trades, in making the best suits of armour, or the best arrows, for those who may have to use them."

Many of his discourses, descend from the higher regions of what may be called political morality, to the discussion of questions connected with political economy, such as the distribution of the land, the best mode of raising a revenue, and the means by which an impetus can be given to industry and commerce. According to the nomenclature of the present day, he was decidedly a "free-trader," and in common with the great master, of whom he professed himself to be but a humble disciple, had for his chief object, when insisting upon the necessity of good government, to effect such a change in the conduct of the ruler towards those he ruled over, as would spread the greatest amount of happiness, over the greatest proportion of the people.

Mencius does not indulge in speculations as to man's future destiny. He frequently alludes to Heaven, as the great dispenser of all good gifts; and insists upon natural laws, being but a visible expression of the Divine will; but, like his great master, he is content to rest there. He, too, is no dogmatic theologian, but another earnest teacher, who sought to permeate society with happiness, by the elevation of the individual character, and so produce an increased capacity for the imitation of great examples.

CHAPTER XX.

Concluding remarks—The place of Confucius amongst the teachers of the world—The insufficiency of his religious teaching for popular requirements—The effect produced by him on the character of his countrymen.

I HAVE, so far, given a sketch of the state of China at the time preceding the birth of Confucius; of the leading incidents of his life; of his mode and style of teaching; and of the literature by which his doctrines are taught at the present day.

It is now proposed to consider him under the light of the knowledge which has been thus gained, and to endeavour, whilst doing so, not only to determine the place he holds amongst the other great reformers of the world; but to estimate at its proper value, the effect produced, morally and politically, upon the Chinese by his teaching.

But, before proceeding to do this, I must again impress upon the reader the necessity for constantly bearing the fact in mind, that twenty-three centuries have passed away since Confucius stood forth to

denounce the vices of his age, and to endeavour to reform it. The period in which he lived, and the circumstances by which he was surrounded, form the key to his every thought and action, and unless we keep this before us, it will be impossible to understand him, or to set a right estimate upon the degree of influence he was able to exert.

Twenty-three centuries of fame, of influence, of adoration. Of how few men can there be said as much?

For it is as a man, a simple, earnest-minded man, that he has to be regarded. No mythological creation of—it may be—a distempered fancy; no great conqueror, the founder of a mighty empire upon the ruin of kingdoms, and by the destruction or enslavement of his fellow-men; no pretender to the possession of supernatural powers, or to a more than ordinary knowledge of the agencies by which this world is governed. No! none of these. He was but an inquirer, a seeker after truth, a searcher after the right—the Divine—way; and it was when he thought he had found that way, that he became untiring in his efforts to induce others to walk in it.

It was this wish to share, that which he conceived to be the best, with others, which sets such a special stamp upon his teaching; and it is through this, that he has established such a lasting claim upon the

gratitude of his fellow-countrymen, and caused himself to be held in such high honour, not only as a teacher, but as a benefactor.

Yet, with all his popularity, he was no flatterer of the passions or weaknesses of the multitude. With him there was no *vox populi vox Dei.* He was a profound believer in the Divine right of princes, and anything approaching to a popular government, was quite outside of the theory of state-craft which he enunciated. His great desire, was to see the people well governed; but he considered that this could only be effected, by the action of those who had been appointed by a Divine decree to rule over them.

There does not appear the slightest pretension to a Divine mission, in anything he said or wrote; on the contrary, he tells his disciples plainly that he was not gifted with superior knowledge, but that he owed all he knew to the eagerness with which he had studied, and to his love for the ancients, and that they had only to adopt the same means, and they would arrive at the same result. There was no mystery or concealment about anything he said or did. He laid bare his doctrines before those he wished to teach, and was always ready to explain any difficulties which might stand in the way of their being comprehended.

That he is open to the charge of transcendentalism,

can scarcely be denied, and it is very difficult to form an exact and precise conception of the fundamental idea, upon which his whole system was based—the recovery of that Divine gift of spiritual perfection, which naturally belongs to man, though it remains undeveloped in the contaminated atmosphere of a vicious world. But, if we substitute the simple word "religion" for this striving after the higher spiritual life, which avowedly proceeds *from* God, and is therefore *of* God, much that was difficult before, is made plain to us. And when we come to the definition of his system of teaching, which is said to have been founded on knowledge, moral rectitude, sincerity, and truth, and substitute for "knowledge"—"the religion which restrains us, through a knowledge of God, gained by a study within ourselves of the Divine principles he has implanted in us," which is obviously the sense in which the word is frequently used by him, his doctrine presents itself in a light very different from that belonging to the commonplace form in which it is usually presented to us, and I think that there are many passages in the "Four Books" which fully justify this view.

But it has to be remembered that the religion which he taught, was no new one. His beliefs, were those of the period in which he lived, though he seems to have seized upon and accentuated all that

was most spiritual, and most capable of being practically applied, in the teaching of that antiquity which he so greatly revered. And the cause of this reverence is not far to seek. It proceeded from a conviction, that in those great sovereigns so frequently set before his disciples as examples, the original purity of man's nature had been manifested to a degree, which amounted to little less than a revelation of the great all-powerful, all-pervading, ever-present, but else unknown, God. It was not so much in their human, but in their "God-like" character, in which he presented them, not only as guides and mentors, but as examples, of the degree to which it was possible to regain the primal purity, through which God had originally disclosed his own nature to man.

But this idea of the original purity of man's nature, does not specially belong to Confucius. It belongs to the dogmatic teaching of Christianity with respect to man's condition before the Fall; and, as has been already stated, a similar thought is frequently to be found passing through the brain of modern thinkers. Indeed, many writers refer to it, though in different terms, and it is not always easy to seize upon their exact meaning. Schlegel, in his "Philosophy of History," says: "The most important subject, and the first problem of philosophy, is the *restoration*"—the italics are mine—"of the lost image of God, so

far as this relates to science. Should this restoration in the eternal consciousness be fully understood and really brought about, the object of pure philosophy is attained."

Surely this comes very near to the view entertained by Confucius!

Spenser, too, was not very far from it when he wrote—

> "So oft as I with state of present time
> The image of the antique world compare,
> When as man's age was in his freshest prime,
> And the first blossoms of fair virtue bare;
> Such odds I find 'twixt those and these which are,
> As that through long continuance of his course,
> Meseems the world is run quite out of square
> From the first point of his appointed source,
> And being once amiss grows daily worse and worse."

There is something very startling in the mysterious working of the human mind, which is brought home to us, when we come in contact with instances of men, removed from each other by vast periods, and living under totally different conditions, working out the same problems, and sometimes arriving at the same conclusions. But even when the conclusions are different, the end sought for is often the same; and it is the difference in the means which may be employed which causes these men in later ages to stand out prominently from their fellows, as poets, law-givers, moralists, philosophers, sages, prophets,

and in the earlier ages of the world, as demi-gods; for such men, amongst a semi-civilized but grateful people, were almost certain to be deified, and to receive worship. But from this category of great men of teachers, reformers, seekers after truth, and expounders of it when it was thought to have been found, the names of the founders of new religions must not be omitted.

It will have been seen, that amongst these last Confucius has no place. He has no claim to be considered in common with Zoroaster, Buddha, or Mahomet, for each and all these were, in a greater or less degree, destroyers of the social and religious systems which preceded their advent, and the founders of new ones upon their ruins; whilst Confucius sought neither to destroy nor to create, but to preserve and restore. He was no law-giver like Moses; Laou-tsze stands unquestionably nearer to Pythagoras than he does; and the comparison which might be drawn between him and Plato or Socrates, could only be within very narrow limits.

If it be always difficult to establish a correct standard for the admeasurement of the breadth and depth of an exceptional character, it is especially so in the case of Confucius; for indoctrinated as we are, by the aggregated teaching of a mighty past, it is by no means easy for us to form a just conception of the

exact degree of intelligence belonging to a great but comparatively untutored mind, at the distant period, and under the peculiar circumstances, in which he lived. But I think that, whether we take him by himself, or judge him in comparison with others, it can scarcely be denied that he stands out a bold and well-defined figure, full of grandeur and individuality, no matter whether the light we may regard him in, may be that of statesman, philosopher, or sage. The solitary grandeur of Confucius's character has indeed been recognized by Pope in the lines—

> "Superior and alone Confucius stood,
> Who taught that useful science—to be good;"

and I do not think it would be possible to sum up the results of the most minute and exact analysis of his character, in fewer or more appropriate words.

But the question naturally arises, how is it, if Confucius were not the founder of a religion, that his name has become so intimately associated with, and indeed, that he has become, as it were, an integral part of the religious system, which forms the rule of faith for all the most highly educated Chinese at the present time?

The answer is not difficult to find, or far to seek. We have seen the high place the early sovereigns—the sages of antiquity—occupied in the estimation of Confucius as the nearest exponents upon earth of

the Divine perfection; and, for the same reason, the adoration which they received in the ancestral rites; and how, after the great teacher's death, successive sovereigns had striven to do honour to his memory, until the purity of his character was made to overshadow even that of those to whom his chief homage had been offered, and he was set forth as the one, the greatest, and most perfect—"pattern for all ages." Hence it is that he has become a representation of all those Divine qualities that man most needs, and that, honoured as the chief of saints, he is thus apostrophized in the sacrificial ritual for the temple of sages—

> "Confucius! Confucius!
> Great indeed art thou, O Confucius.
> Before thee
> None like unto thee;
> After thee
> None equal to thee.
> Confucius! Confucius!
> Great indeed art thou, O Confucius."

But if such be the estimation in which he is held by the Chinese, how are *we* to esteem him? Has his teaching been a real benefit to humanity? Is any reflex of his pure ideals to be found in the lives of the people who profess this great reverence for his name?

Yes; I would reply. The honour which is paid to his memory, the esteem in which his writings are

held, the veneration which is attached to every word he uttered, is a sufficient answer.

But, it may be objected, the Chinese are a cruel, untruthful, dishonest people, devoid of any fine sense of honour, immersed in material self-seeking, and caring little for that higher life in this world, which struggles to obtain the prize of a still higher life in the world beyond; tolerators of infanticide, and inveterate smokers of opium. Such is the popular summing up against them. Can it be true?

Alas! much of it is but too true, but not *because* of the teaching, but *despite* of the teaching, of Confucius.

And if we cast our eyes over the Christian world, and survey the eighteen centuries which have elapsed since that Child was born, whose birth was to inaugurate a reign of "Peace upon earth and good will to men," shall we not find that similar accusations might equally be brought, against those who profess to be the followers of a Teacher, who "being God became man."

Cruelty? Where shall we find greater or more refined cruelties, than those which were habitually practised, in many cases as a part of a carefully thought-out judicial procedure, down to a comparatively recent date. There is no nation in Europe, of which the history would be complete, without frequent

and often detailed accounts of horrors, which chill the blood of those who read them. Who can even glance at a torture-chamber, with all its terrible appliances, without a shudder? And yet, how few remember that it is not many centuries since those dreadful instruments were in daily use? It is not four centuries since the Inquisition was doing its fearful work in the Netherlands and Spain; scarcely half that time has elapsed, since all the rank and fashion of Paris, were assembled to gloat upon the all-day tortures of the wretched Damiens. Our own burnings and maimings, and hanging, drawing, and quarterings, come down almost to our own times; and the terrible floggings in our fleets and armies were continued, in a modified form, to within our own memories.

As to morality, where would it be possible to find anything worse than the condition of Rome and the morals of the popes, and of the princes of the Church, at the time of, and antecedent to, the Reformation? China could not at any period have been worse than Christendom was then; but do we find that this fact is brought forward as a proof, that the doctrines of the Gospel are untrue, or that they have been preached in vain?

And so we might go on with the whole category. Opium? True, we don't smoke it, but we make fortunes by selling it to those who do. Honesty?

Have we not had to blush for some of our Manchester manufacturers? Infanticide? We have arrayed the extreme penalty of the law against it, and yet we cannot stop it. And finally, is our action in this world always made to harmonize with our religious duties, and an aspiration for a higher life in the next? And this brings me to another point which has to be considered—the rapid extension of Buddhism in China, after its introduction in the first century of our era, despite the efforts which were subsequently made to suppress it.

The only conclusion which it is possible to arrive at with respect to this, is that, with all its merits, the ancient religion of China, as illustrated in the teaching of Confucius, was insufficient to appease the craving, which seems inherent in man's nature, after a knowledge of a future life, and of the means by which that everlasting bliss is to be obtained, which will best compensate the mortal soul for all the suffering it may have to undergo when inhabiting its earthly mansion. Laou-tsze had grandly, but far too vaguely, entered upon the mystery which belongs to departed being; but his thoughts were beyond the comprehension of the multitude. It required something more material in form, something that would better appeal to the senses; and all this was to be found in the rich symbolism and ornate rites of Buddhism, adminis-

tered by a numerous body of priests, whose very ignorance was, in many cases, a bond of union between them and the communities they were called upon to instruct.

For it cannot be questioned that there were many serious thinkers, and earnest seekers after truth, who were actuated by the highest motives, when adopting Buddhism. These accused the doctrines of Confucius of having no higher aim than the happiness of posterity, and a peaceful and contented present life. They contrasted with this, the teaching of Sakya Muni, whose one great sentiment was, that of mercy seeking to save; who pointed to hell, in order to deter men from sin, and to heaven, in order to urge them to well-doing; who pictured to them the blessedness of the Nirvâna, where the tired spirit would rest in everlasting peace, at the end of a weary round of ceaseless change. They considered, that no higher incentive could be offered to virtue, than the promised rewards belonging to a future state; and this the followers of Confucius denied. These declared that to act well, from a wish to obtain some personal benefit, could not be compared with the conduct that had no other ground than a sense of duty; and it is on this higher level, that the controversy has been continued to the present day.

Though Confucianism is the religion of the State,

and generally of the educated classes, Buddhism forms that of the bulk of the people, whilst a small and degraded minority profess to follow the teaching of the pure and spiritual Laou-tsze.

It might have been thought that some of the ancient ceremonies, and more especially the sacrificial rites, in connection with what seems on the face of it the "worship" of ancestors, would have kept the Buddhists and Taouists widely apart from those, whose religious belief is based on the tenets taught by Confucius. But it is not so. They participate freely in all those rites at which their presence is required, and the line which separates them is sometimes so lightly drawn as to be hardly perceptible.

Doubtless, too, modifications have taken place in the creed of the more intelligent modern Chinese, which has removed much that would be deemed objectionable. Thus, in an edict issued by command of the Emperor Khang-hy in the last century, it is stated, "Sacrifices are not offered to the visible and material heaven, but to the Lord and Master of all." And the ancestral rites are defined as "A mere civil ceremonial observance by which it is intended to testify reverence and respect for departed worth;" and this was the sense in which they were accepted by the Jesuits.

But notwithstanding the changes which have taken

place in the beliefs of the people, in one thing they have remained constant—Confucius still holds the first place in their estimation. He is still their great example, their moral teacher. The "Five Classics" and the "Four Books" still form the text-books of Chinese education; and it is mainly through them, that the national character has been moulded into a form that, amidst much that is puerile and degraded, still presents vestiges of antique grandeur.

Thus continuously, through more than two thousand years, have the writings, and the recorded thoughts, of this great teacher, been the standard of life and morals, for the countless myriads of a mighty empire. Dynasties have been changed, new religions introduced, Tartar conquerors have seized the imperial power; but the supremacy obtained by the orphan son of the old Prefect of Tseaou-y is as firmly established as ever. There is something solemn in the thought, that one small brain should be capable of producing such a great and lasting work, and it is difficult, when allowing the mind to dwell upon it, to refrain from exclaiming, in sympathy with his Chinese venerators—

> "Confucius! Confucius.
> Great indeed art thou, O Confucius."

APPENDIX.

A.

IN order to show, that the metrical form in which I have rendered the opening chapter of Laou-tsze's great work, has preserved the spirit and meaning of the original; I give a literal translation of the accompanying Chinese text—I regret being obliged to confine myself to the phonetic equivalents of the far more forcible ideographic characters—together with the translations of Stanislas Julien, and Victor von Strauss.

The Chinese text, phonetically rendered according to the method adopted by Medhurst in his Chinese and English Dictionary, is as follows:—

Taòu k'hò taóu, fei ch'hâng Taòu;
Ming k'hò ming, fei ch'hâng Ming.
Woò ming, t'heen tè che chè
Yèw ming, wan wŭh che moo.
Koó ch'hang woô yŭh, è kwán k'hê maou
Ch'hang yèw yŭh, è kwán k'hê keaou
Tszè lëang chày, t'hûng ch'hŭh ûrh é ming
Thûng wei che heuen, heuen che yéu heuen.
Chúng maou che mûn.

Which may be literally translated—

The Taou which can be described in words, is not the everlasting (infinite, all-pervading, all-creating) Taou.
The Name, which can be named (or spoken), is not the everlasting name (of the Infinite Taou).

For unnameable is (the great first Cause) the Maker of Heaven and earth.
Whilst He who can be named is but the Mother (the Creator) of all (those) things (of which our senses are cognizant).
Hence he who would obtain a knowledge of this great mystery (of spiritual being)
Must keep himself free from carnal desires.
For he who gives way to passion, will not be able to see beyond the limits imposed by his senses.
Yet both (spirit and matter) issue from the same source,
Though they exist under different names.
The origin of both is equally obscure, for great is the obscurity
Which enshrouds the portals, through which we penetrate to these mysteries.

The following are the translations of M. Stanislas Julien and Victor v. Strauss :—

STANISLAS JULIEN.

La voie qui peut être exprimée par la parole n'est pas la Voie éternelle ; le nom qui peut être nommé n'est pas le nom éternel.

(L'être) sans nom est l'origine du ciel et de la terre ; avec un nom, il est la mère de toutes choses.

C'est pourquoi, lorsqu'on est constamment exempt de passions, on voit son essence spirituelle ; lorsqu'on a constamment des passions, on le voit sous une forme bornée.

Ces deux choses ont une même origine et reçoivent des *noms* différents. On les appelle toutes deux profondes, doublement profondes. C'est la porte de toutes les choses spirituelles.

VICTOR V. STRAUSS.

Taò, kann er ausgesprochen werden, ist nicht der ewige Taò. Der Name, kann er genannt werden ist nicht der ewige Name. Der Namenlose ist Himmels und der Erden Urgrund, der Namen-Habende ist aller Wesen Mutter. Drum

"Wer stets begierdenlos, der
Schauet seine Geisterkeit,
Wer stets Begierden hat, der
Schauet seine Aussenheit."

Diese Beiden sind desselben Ausgangs und verschiedenen Namens. Zusammen heissen sie tief, des Tiefen abermal Tiefes ; aller Geistigkeiten Pforte.

The character "Taòu" is used by Laou-tsze, in this and future chapters, in a sense which renders it impossible to deny that the single word by which it could be best expressed in our language would be God. Amongst many other meanings it has that of "a path," "a way"—therefore inferentially, *the* Path, *the* Way—of, to, and from, God, and so, by a natural substitution with which our language is familiar, it is employed metaphorically, by Laou-

tsze, for, God. It has also the meaning of "Reason," and this has been the cause of the followers of Laou-tsze having been erroneously called "Rationalists" by those who had not fully acquainted themselves with the tenour of the great philosopher's teaching.

But, with a different accent, "Taóu" is made to signify "a word," "to speak," "to say"—generally in the sense of explanation—and other cognate terms; hence, probably, it is that we find it used, by our English translators of the New Testament into Chinese, to express "the Word" in the first chapter of St. John, "Yuên chè yèw Taou," "In the beginning was 'the Taou.'"

I think it would be impossible for any one to read the first five verses of St. John, with "the Taou" substituted for "the Word," without feeling an increased interest in the writings of this Chinese "Seeker after God."

B.

In dealing with this chapter, I have preferred to adhere, as closely as I felt justified in doing, to the rendering of M. G. Pauthier, given at page 400 in the second volume of the "Bibliothèque Orientale," which presents itself to my mind as nearer the letter as well as the spirit of the original, than the translations of the other distinguished Sinologues who have devoted themselves to a consideration of this book. The reasons which have guided my choice are these: After a most careful examination of the Chinese text and the several translations, I found myself compelled to the conclusion that the great object of Laou-tsze, when writing this chapter, had been to depict the genesis of Creation by "Taou," from whom all things, whether material objects or spiritual manifestations, were but emanations; and that, therefore, I could not accept the views of those who had persuaded themselves that the meaning of the chapter was to be sought rather in its having been the intention of Laou-tsze to describe the nature of Taou as revealed to man by those manifestations which were but emanations

from him, and that hence it was in the study of nature, and of our own spiritual condition, that a knowledge of Taou was to be gained.

The following translations will show the difference in the treatment of this chapter to which I have referred :—

M. S. JULIEN.

Les formes visibles de la Grande Vertu émanent uniquement du Tao.
Voici quelle est la nature du Tao.
Il est vague, il est confus.
Qu'il est confus, qu'il est vague !
Au dedans de lui, il-y-a des images.
Qu'il est vague, qu'il est confus !
Au dedans de lui, il-y-a des êtres.
Qu'il est profond, qu'il est obscur !
Au dedans de lui il-y-a une essence spirituelle.
Cette essence spirituelle est profondément vrai.
Au dedans de lui, réside le témoignage infaillible (de ce qu'il est) ; depuis les temps anciens jusqu' aujourd'hui, son nom n'a point passé.
Il donne issue (naissance) à tous les êtres.
Comment sais-je qu'il en est ainsi de tous les êtres ?
(Je le sais) par le Tao.

M. G. PAUTHIER.

Les formes matérielles de la grande puissance créatrice
Ne sont que les émanations du Tao.
C'est le Tao qui a produit les êtres matériels existants.
(Avant) ce n'était qu'une confusion complète, un chaos indéfinissable.
C'était un chaos ! une confusion inaccessible à la pensée humaine !
Au milieu de ce chaos, il y avait une image indéterminée,
Confuse . . . indistincte ! au dessus de toute expression !
Au milieu de ce chaos il y avait des êtres,
Mais des êtres en germe ! des êtres imperceptibles, indéfinis !
Au milieu de ce chaos, il y avait un principe subtil vivifiant :
Ce principe subtil vivifiant c'était la suprême vérité.
Au milieu de ce chaos, il y avait un principe de foi,
Depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours.
Son nom ne s'est point évanoui.
Il examina avec soin le bon de tous les êtres.
Mais vous comment connaissez-vous les vertus de la foule ?
Par ce Tao, raison suprême.

The divergence between these two translations is certainly very striking. Its cause is to be traced to the ambiguity belonging to many passages of the original, as well as to the different methods adopted in deciphering them. I am bound to say that the German version of von Strauss accords rather with Stanis-

las Julien than with M. Pauthier, but although I have read all he has written on the subject very carefully, I still remain in the belief, that the transcendentalism with which he has clothed Laou-tsze's words does not belong to the original, which, for the edification of any Chinese student who may read this, I now produce, together with what appears to me to be its literal meaning.

CHINESE TEXT.	LITERAL TRANSLATION.
K'hùng tih che yûng...	The Supreme Good as manifested to us
Wuy Taou shé tsung	Is an emanation from Taou,
Taou che wei wŭh	The creative principle of Taou.
Wuy hwang wuy hwŭh	(In the beginning) nought but chaos.
Hwŭh he, hwang he...	How profound—how drear it was !
Ke chung yèw sëang...	Then out of $\frac{\text{his}}{\text{its}}$ midst came forms.
Hwang he hwŭh he	Oh, how drear and deep it was !
Ke chung yèw wŭh	Out of $\frac{\text{his}}{\text{its}}$ midst came material objects.
Yaou he mi-g he	Oh, the stillness, the darkness !
Ke chung yèw tsing	Out of $\frac{\text{his}}{\text{its}}$ midst came the germs of life
Ke tsing shín chin	Perfect in subtlety.
Ke chung yèw sin	From $\frac{\text{his}}{\text{its}}$ midst came belief (consciousness)
Tse koo keae kin	So that from then till now
Ke ming pŭh choo	The $\frac{\text{fame}}{\text{knowledge}}$ of this remains with us
E yuĕ chung poò	When all that the world contains passes in review before us.
Woô hô è che...	(If asked) how do I know that this
Chung poò che jên tsae	Was the beginning of all things ?
È tsè	All that I have now said is my answer.

Even to those unacquainted with Chinese, the metrical structure of the text will be very apparent, and much of its obscurity is most certainly due to it. With respect to the elucidation of obscure portions of this work by Chinese commentators, it has

always to be borne in mind, that their judgment is almost certain to be warped by prejudice or by the influence of the particular school of thought in which they had been educated. Thus, the literati of the Confucian school would certainly be indisposed to find anything in the writing of Laou-tsze which might place him on a level with their great master, or interfere with the system of cosmogony set forth in the pages of the "Yi-king." The Taouists of the present day, would seek to find some occult meaning, as their forefathers sought to find some occult meaning, in every word that Laou-tsze uttered; whilst the Buddhists would wrest some meaning out of every chapter that, would best reconcile his tenets with those of the Nirvâna, and the glorification of the mere contemplative life.

Every attempt to translate this great work into a European language is a step forward, but I believe very much has yet to be done, before it will be presented to the public in a form, which will give such a shape to the ideas of the great Chinese thinker, as will render them capable of being comprehended in the sense which he had sought to convey.

C.

Stanislas Julien has avowedly based his translation of this chapter—the twenty-fifth—on the special reading, given by commentators in two out of the eight editions of this work which he had consulted, of the opening line, "Yèw wŭh hwan chíng," "There was naught but chaos," which would convert it into "Yèw yih wŭh hwan ching," translated by him, "Il est un être confus."

Von Strauss follows in the same track, but M. Pauthier adheres more closely to the original text, which, it seems to me, the intervention of the commentators has only helped to obscure. Laou-tsze had evidently the ideas expressed in the opening chapter in his mind, when he wrote this one, and, to be understood, it has to be read in connection with it. For myself, I cannot believe it could have been part of Laou-tsze's system of teaching, to make everything he uttered so entirely

beyond the comprehension of those he was seeking to enlighten, as would be the case if we were to place implicit confidence in the explanations of his many commentators, and I am fully convinced that, whenever a sentence is capable of a simple construction, it will be found, in nine cases out of ten, to be the correct one.

I subjoin the original text, and the literal translation I attach to it.

Yèw wŭh hwan ching	There was naught but chaos
Seen T'heen tè sang	Before heaven and earth were.
Ts'heih he leaou he	Oh, how silent, oh, how void it was!
T'hŭh leih ŭrh pŭh kaè	He stood alone without changing
Chow hing ŭrh pŭh t'hae	Or moved around and was harmed not
K'hò è wei t'heen hëá moo	Of Heaven and of earth the great mother.
Woo pŭh che k'he ming	I do not know his name,
Tszé che yuĕ Taou	But designate him as Taòu.
K'hëang wei che wei ming	But were I forced to find a name
Yuĕ Ta	I would call him the Great One, the All-Powerful.
Ta yuĕ shé	Great in the sense of infinite,
Shé yuĕ yuen	Infinite, that is, all-pervading.
Yuen yuĕ fan	All-pervading in the sense of infinite expansion and retrocession.
Koo Taou tá	So it is—The Taou is great,
Teen tá	Heaven is great,
Tè tá, Wong yih tá	The earth is great, and the king is great,
Yih chung yèn sze tá	But within his state
Urh wong keu k'he yih jèn	The king is paramount.
Jin fă tè	Man's laws are of earth,
Tè fa t'heen	Nature's laws are from Heaven,
T'heen fa Taòu	Heaven's laws are from Taou,
Taòu fa tsze jèn	And Taou's laws are from himself.

On comparing the metrical version I have given in the body of the work with the above, I think it will be seen that though only a broad outline of the original, it has been kept within the limits of accuracy.

D.

This is an adaptation of the paraphrase by M. Pauthier of the sixteenth chapter, which, when taken in connection with the thirty-third, brings out clearly Laou-tsze's belief in the immortality of the soul, though, with him, it takes the shape of a final absorption into the spiritual essence of the everlasting and infinite Being from whom it was in the first instance an emanation.

Should I have been able to create a sufficient interest in this great thinker, to induce the reader to wish to gain a greater knowledge of his writings, I can but refer him to the authorities I have already quoted; unfortunately they are full of divergences and contradictions, which it is to be hoped will be reconciled in course of time, by the greater light which may be thrown upon the many difficulties by which the meaning of the text is now obscured.

Besides the translations I have cited, there is an English version of this work, which I have not seen, by Mr. Chalmers.

E.

A comparison with the original text will show how closely I have preserved the literal meaning, whilst adopting a phraseology which seemed to me the one best applicable to the subject. The translation of this passage, as given by Dr. Legge, is as follows:—

"The Tî said, 'Ho! (President of) the Four Mountains, I have been on the throne seventy years. You can carry out my commands, I will resign my place to you.' The chief said, 'I have not the virtue, I should disgrace your place.' (The Ti) said, 'Show me some one among the illustrious, or set forth one among the poor and mean.' All (then) said to the Tî, 'There is an unmarried man among the lower people, called Shun of Yu.' The Tî said, 'Yes, I have heard of him. What have you to say about him?' The chief said, 'He is the son of a blind man. His father was obstinately unprincipled, his (step)mother was insincere, his (half)-brother Hsiang was arrogant. He

has been able (however) by his filial piety to live in harmony with them, and to lead them gradually to self-government, so that they (no longer) proceed to great wickedness.' The Tî said, 'I will try him, I will wive him, and thereby see his behaviour with my two daughters.' (Accordingly) he arranged and sent down his two daughters to the north of the Kwei to be wives in (the family of) Yu. The Tî said to them, 'Be reverent.'

F.

This ode has been very happily and poetically rendered into German by von Strauss.

I append a literal translation of the Chinese text, though it is difficult to do justice to its peculiar terseness, and preserve its alliterative character without destroying its coherence.

I would observe here that one of the great peculiarities of the Chinese written language, is that it seems to appeal to the imagination in an unusually large degree, so that, after endeavouring to decipher its ideographic characters, full as they are of concentrated meaning, the subject will often present itself to the mind by a similar process, to that which enables a broad but artistically rendered outline to convey to the spectator a knowledge of accurate and even minute details whilst only suggesting them, and hence it will frequently happen that all the incidents of a scene will be brought vividly before the reader by a few words for which our language has no adequate equivalent. Literally this ode would read thus—

"The wild doves coo to each other in the islet in the stream, where lives in strict seclusion, the pure (and lovely) maiden the prince has selected for his bride.

"Aquatic plants float on the surface, and green grasses line the banks of the stream, near which the fair maiden lives secluded.

"She is never absent from the prince's thoughts; sleeping or waking it is as if he sought for her and could not find her. Sleeping or waking she is in his thoughts or dreams. 'Alas! alas!' he cries as he turns, and turns, in sad unrest.

"And the water plants and rushes grow luxuriantly in the clear waters of the stream (washing the shores of the island), where the fair one solaces herself in her seclusion with her beloved harp and lute.

"And still the aquatic plants float on the surface of the stream, and green grasses line its banks, but the heart of the fair maiden is filled with joy, for she listens to the music of the drums and bells, which herald her progress as she is borne to the home of the beloved one."

It has to be observed that, although this is a literal, it is by no means a verbal translation, which would be all but unintelligible.

The "wild doves," of the opening strophe, is in accordance with the meaning of the characters in the original, given in Medhurst's Dictionary: von Strauss translates "ducks" ("enten").

In the metrical paraphrase in the body of the work, I have preferred to call the aquatic plants "water-lilies," whilst von Strauss speaks of them as "see-rosen."

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.

00025896

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018